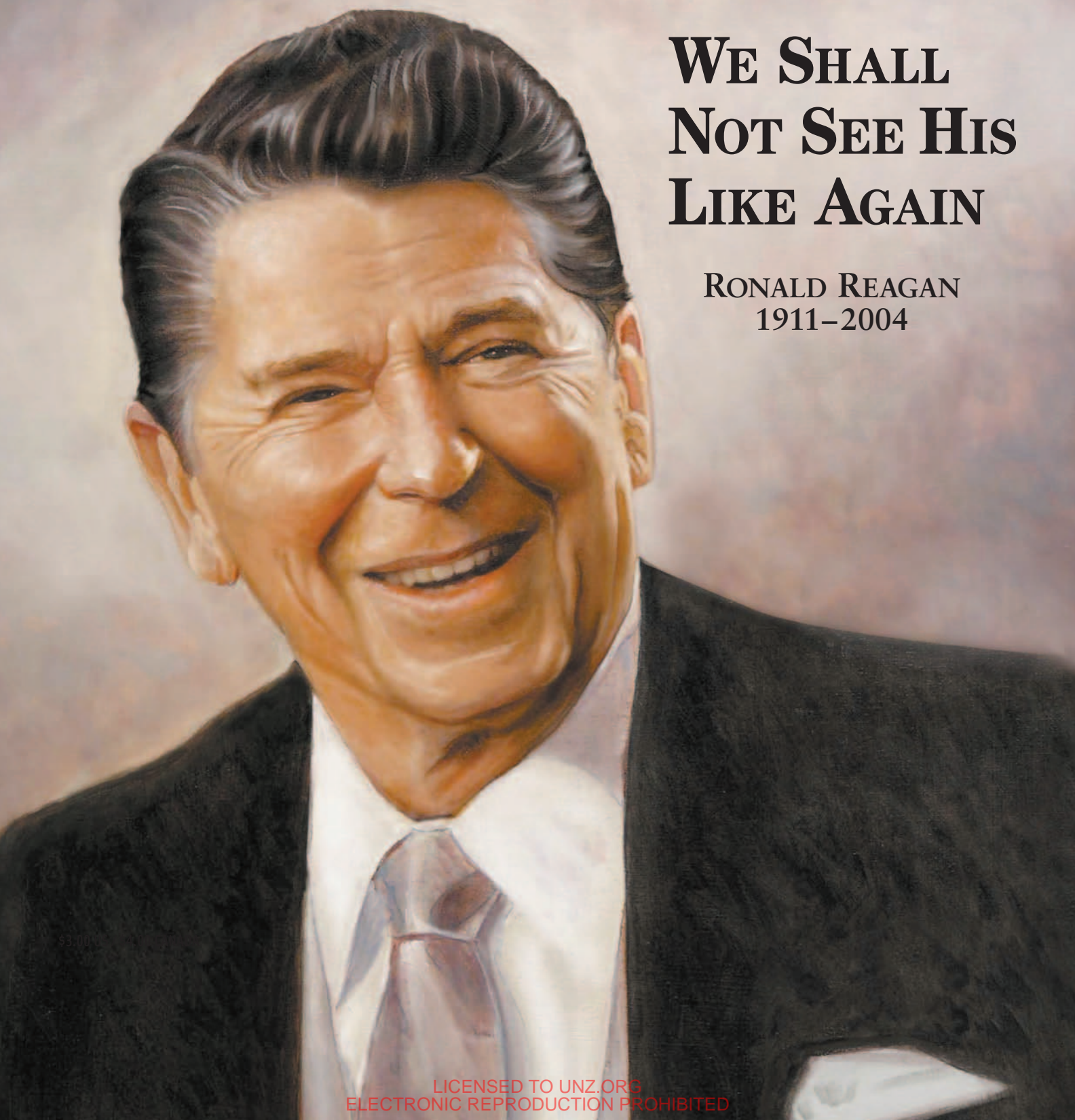


JULY 5, 2004

# The American Conservative

**WE SHALL  
NOT SEE HIS  
LIKE AGAIN**

**RONALD REAGAN  
1911–2004**



## PRO-LIFE, PRO-NADER

Ralph Nader: pro-fetus, pro-family, pro-clergy ... pro-life? (June 21). Pat should have asked Ralph if he supported President Bush's decision to sign away \$59 million of our tax money in January to pay for global abortions and if Ralph Nader would waste time stumping for Arlen Specter.

MIKE CZYSH  
via e-mail

## DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

I have subscribed to *The American Conservative* almost since its inception. I am also an Orthodox Jew, so I think I can respond, with some authority, to the perfidious allegations made by David Brooks, and other neoconservatives, that *TAC* in any way promotes anti-Semitism. Quite the contrary. Many of the contributors to this fine journal are Jewish, and I can freely attest that *TAC* prints my letters while several Jewish weeklies, including the *Chicago Jewish News* in my area, routinely decline to do so.

What *TAC* has opened up for discussion is the manner in which the neoconservative establishment, from Daniel Pipes's Middle East Forum to the editorials one sees regularly in the *Weekly Standard* and *National Review*, has equated American national interests with promoting the hard-line Revisionist Zionist ideology of Likud and the West Bank settler movement in Israel. Rabbi Ben Zion Uziel, one of Israel's first Chief Rabbis, spoke of the creation of the State of Israel as a harbinger of international peace. Yet the policies promoted by the neocons, which subvert the Greater Israel movement, contribute to the exact opposite. While Sharon's decision to withdraw unilaterally from Gaza is a step in the right direction, I cannot see how allowing some West Bank settlements to remain in place, a key pillar of President Bush's new white paper on the Arab-Israeli conflict, can be helpful

to anyone, Israeli or Palestinian, caught up in this terrible quagmire.

These are the very things Patrick Buchanan and his cadre of courageous journalists at *TAC* are trying to bring to the front-page of the American body politic for the discussion the neoconservatives would otherwise shut down in the cause of "National Security." For that alone, I am extremely grateful!

DAVID L. BLATT  
Chicago, Ill.

## TAKE MY STAND

Bravo for Fred Reed's insight in "All Loyalty is Local" (June 21) that "a man has a certain dignity when he stands in his own farm or when he owns his own store .... When he becomes a salaried warehouseman for a remote office in Milwaukee, he doesn't."

Chesterton and Belloc could hardly have put this rooted conservatism better. Actually, Belloc wrote a book, *The Servile State*, nearly a century ago that described this need for roots for the individual. Our conservative vision must capture the need for a human scale to economic life. While it can be called a Third Way between rapacious capitalism and central planning, it has its foundations in the Distributist political philosophy of an earlier generation and would reflect the Western spiritual patrimony that infused Europe's Christian Democracy movements.

This magazine recently asked its readers for their opinions as to the approach of the traditional right. An approach that leads our nation back to its spiritual basis and to the human scale of enterprises would do well enough.

THOMAS J. HERRON  
Philadelphia, Pa.

## UNFIT TO PRINT

Marcus Epstein did an excellent job of covering the political debate of Affirmative Action Bake Sales (AABS) on col-

lege campuses (June 7). One aspect that he did not touch on, however, is how the debate was portrayed (or shaped) by campus media. As a University of Washington alum, I am in a unique position to comment.

On October 8, 2003 a UW College Republican AABS grew unruly "when passers-by started shouting, tearing down posters and eventually dumping the cookies on the ground," according to the official campus paper, *The Daily*. Although property damage and heated arguments ensued (the police were present, and campus officials shut down the event), *The Daily* chose not to cover the incident as news but instead wrote an editorial denouncing College Republicans for staging a publicity stunt.

Under any other circumstances, a dispute of this sort would be front-page news for a campus newspaper. Local TV and newspapers covered it, and eventually CNN and other national media picked up the story. Yet the official campus paper did not find it newsworthy, reportedly telling UW College Republican President Jason Chambers that *The Daily* "does not cover bake sales."

ERIK TOMREN  
Seattle, Wash.

## THE MISSING LINK

Talk about the dog that didn't bark! The glaring omission in "Come Home, America" (June 7), an otherwise welcome and well-reasoned article on reassessing our global alignments and alliances after the Iraq War, is perhaps the most important—our relationship with Israel. Tsk, tsk, *American Conservative*. I'm shocked, truly shocked.

S.K. OBERBECK  
Sanibel, Fla.

*The American Conservative* welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com) or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209.

REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE



[ REAGAN ]

## We Shall Not See His Like Again

BY PATRICK J. BUCHANAN President Reagan called America “hopeful, big-hearted, idealistic, daring, decent, and fair.” So it shall be said of him. **Page 6**

## American Realist

BY DOUG BANDOW The man who brought down the Evil Empire had a humble foreign policy. **Page 8**

## At the Pleasure of The President

BY JAMES G. WATT He won our loyalty by being true to his troops—and his principles. **Page 10**

## He Spoke for Us

BY KEN KHACHIGIAN The message matched the man. **Page 11**

## Capitalist Revolution

BY PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS Ronald Reagan defeated socialism abroad by rejuvenating free enterprise at home. **Page 13**

### COLUMN

**31 Taki:** Resolved: Great Britain may be a poodle, but the Oxford Union's girls are no bow-wows.

### NEWS & VIEWS

**4 Fourteen Days:** Spymaster to Spend Time With Family; Pontifical Counsel; The Real Abortion Fanatics

### ARTICLES

**15 Jim Pittaway:** Iraq's neighbors may be better situated to stabilize the region than the hired commandos currently keeping a lid on chaos.

**20 Steve Sailer:** Power is all in family for Ahmed Chalabi—and the neocons.

**21 Robert Stacy McCain:** Bush's Texas education “miracle” proves to be a mirage.

### ARTS & LETTERS

**24 Steve Sailer:** “Napoleon Dynamite” and “Maria Full of Grace”

**25 Ralph de Toledano:** *An Honest Writer* by Robert K. Landers

**27 Harold O.J. Brown:** *After the Empire* by Emmanuel Todd

**28 Kevin R.C. Gutzman:** *Thomas Jefferson* by R.B. Bernstein

COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS



[INTELLIGENCE]

## TENET TAKES A FALL

The simultaneous retirement of Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and Deputy Director for Operations James Pavitt was triggered by advance warning that the two would be excoriated in impending congressional reports relating to 9/11 and Iraq. Both Tenet and Pavitt believe the congressional criticism to be unjust, and neither is willing to participate in the drastic reform of the CIA that will almost certainly result. Tenet, a garrulous former congressional staffer with no experience as an intelligence officer prior to becoming DCI seven years ago, presided over America's two greatest intelligence failures since Pearl Harbor. Appreciated within the CIA for his defense of the agency and its employees, he was nevertheless generally criticized for his inability to protect the integrity of the intelligence product due to his unseemly close personal relationship with the president.

Tenet's resignation for family reasons was a personally arranged and carefully orchestrated graceful exit. President Bush will not have to admit to any mistakes, and Tenet's résumé will not have to state that he was fired. And his departure will satisfy popular sentiment supporting replacement of some administration officials involved in recent embarrassments.

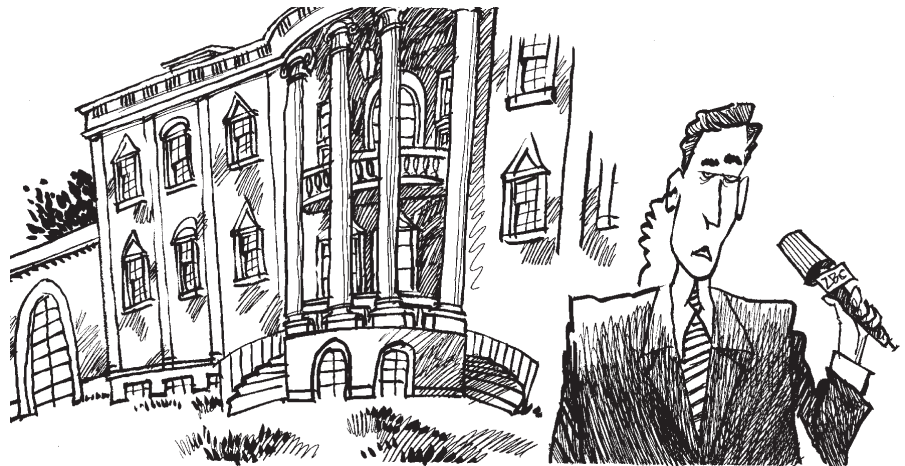
Pavitt, Tenet's protégé, will not be missed by the CIA Operations Directorate. Disliked by most of his subordinates because of his lack of both field experience and managerial sensitivity, he has been blamed for the passive risk-averse culture in the agency that contributed to recent failures.

—Philip Givraldi

[DIPLOMACY]

## PONTIFICAL COUNSEL

The shadow cast by the Iraq War trails President Bush wherever he goes, even to ceremonial events. When Bush met



WHILE THE FBI IS CHALLENGING THE SOURCE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL ASHCROFT IS IN DISAGREEMENT WITH SECRETARY RIDGE OVER THE REPORT, THERE IS INCREASED CHATTER INDICATING THAT CIA DIRECTOR TENET HAS RESIGNED. THE WHITE HOUSE IS SAID TO BE SEEKING CLARIFICATION FROM FORMER TRUSTED ADVISOR, AHMAD CHALABI.

MIKE KEEFE www.caglecartoons.com

with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican to present him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the physically frail but mentally strong pontiff reiterated the Holy See's opposition to the war, urged a swift transfer of sovereignty, condemned the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, and called for a genuine peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians.

While Parkinson's disease made it difficult for the pope to deliver his remarks, the meaning of his polite rebuke was clear: "Mr. President, your visit to Rome takes place at a moment of great concern for the continuing situation of grave unrest in the Middle East, both in Iraq and in the Holy Land.... It is the evident desire of everyone that this situation now be normalized as quickly as possible with the active participation of the international community..."

Bush no doubt sought this photo-op to bolster his appeal among Catholic constituents, but our foreign policy would be much improved if he were as interested in heeding sound moral counsel as chasing votes.

[MEDIA]

## SMELLY LITTLE ORTHODOXIES

Something unfortunate happens to pundits who cling too blindly to ideology. Perhaps their media bookings depend on pithy soundbites and clear partisanship. More likely, pride doesn't permit a re-evaluation when events confound theory. It's easier to run in the ruts.

Witness David Frum's recent *National Review* "Diary" entry in which he takes aim at the venerable London *Spectator*, a monument long before he climbed up to the keyboard. Now, *TAC*'s affection for the *Spectator* is plain, and not only because of our editor's long-running column in the estimable weekly. Over the past 125 years, the magazine has earned international regard for witty commentary and shrewd inquiry, drawing from many streams and belonging to no school.

Ideologues make no place for such independence. "One of the saddest casualties of the war on terrorism has been my once-favorite British magazine, the *Spectator*," Frum writes. For printing several critical pieces—alongside reasoned pro-war arguments—NRO's finest laments, "the magazine seems to have lost both its mind—and its standards."

Notice how, in the neoconservative mind, crossing ideology suggests lunacy, or worse, the taint of some outside influence. Frum goes on, "[Editor Boris] Johnson appears to have handed most of his daily duties over to his deputy, Stuart Reid, a journalist who long ago succumbed to a gloomy and obsessive Buchananite view of the world." We're proud to count Stuart among our favorite *TAC* contributors and can attest to both his sanity and sunniness. That he and the *Spectator* draw Frum's opprobrium says much about the integrity of their endeavor—and about his tolerance for debate.

[ECONOMICS]

## TRADING AWAY AMERICA

Since the North American Free Trade Agreement is working so well—if you don't count the 525,000 American workers certified as NAFTA job-loss victims, rising trade deficits, and deteriorating Mexican wages and environmental conditions—the Bush administration is courting its snappily named Central American cousin, CAFTA.

Under the new trade deal—signed this week but not likely to come up for congressional ratification before the fall elections—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua will become our next case studies in the folly of free-trade. The agreement would phase out duties on American-made industrial and consumer goods over ten years.

U.S. textile manufacturers and sugar growers are understandably up in arms because they can't compete with Central America's sweatshops and plantations. But U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick dismisses their concerns as elitism, accusing American producers of creating "a pretext for shutting poor nations out of our market." Zoellick, who seems to have trouble remembering which country he was appointed to represent, continues, "[CAFTA] offers new hope for easing poverty, fostering development and strengthening democracy." He forgot to mention how it will profit the home front—or perhaps he didn't, because it won't.

[CULTURE]

## ABORTION UNLIMITED

In the latest display of the federal judiciary's abortion fetish, U.S. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton struck down the partial-birth abortion ban as unconstitutional, saying the legislation imposes an "undue burden on a woman's right to choose abortion."

The procedure involves partially delivering a live fetus and crushing his

skull. It is so heinous that many reliably pro-choice legislators have voted for prohibition on the grounds that it is too close to infanticide.

The ruling claimed that the ban was "unconstitutionally vague," in that its "ambiguous" language could be used to charge abortionists who use similar techniques that were not specifically targeted by the law. But this argument is purely speculative, since the ban has not yet been enforced. The judge clearly had no intention of ever giving the law a chance to work.

Pro-lifers are often described as "extremists" or "fanatics" by their opponents. But this reveals the fanaticism of abortion-rights absolutists for whom even the most reasonable restrictions on abortion, supported across the political spectrum, represent some grave threat to imagined constitutional rights.

[SOVEREIGNTY]

## TAXES GO GLOBAL

The average American does not consider the money he receives from a tax cut a "subsidy." But then, he is not—yet—subject to the jurisdiction of the World Trade Organization. In 2002, the WTO decided that America was not taxing its exports heavily enough—that tax breaks for exporters were a subsidy. The U.S. lost its appeal, and so the WTO has authorized European countries to impose tariffs on U.S. goods, beginning last March with a 5 percent tariff and increasing each month until the tariff totals 17 percent. So far they have cost U.S. businesses about \$4 billion.

Isn't free trade purportedly about reducing tariffs rather than imposing them? Moreover, do Americans really want unelected bureaucrats in the WTO deciding that not paying enough tax is the same as a subsidy? We suspect that few realize the WTO is far less about trade than global taxation on the sly. ■

## The American Conservative

### Editors

**Patrick J. Buchanan**  
**Taki Theodoracopulos**

*Executive Editor*  
**Scott McConnell**

*Managing Editor*  
**Kara Hopkins**

*Assistant Editors*  
**W. James Antle III**  
**Daniel McCarthy**

*Art Director*  
**Mark Graef**

*Film Critic*  
**Steve Sailer**

*Office Manager*  
**Veronica Yanos**  
  
*Publishing Consultant*  
**Ronald E. Burr**

### Contributing Editors

**Doug Bandow, Richard Cummings, Michael Desch,**  
**Philip Giraldi, Paul Gottfried, Peter Hitchens,**  
**Christopher Layne, Eric S. Margolis, Justin Raimondo,**  
**Fred Reed, Martin Sieff, R.J. Stove, John Zmirak**

*The American Conservative*, Vol. 3, No. 12, July 5, 2004 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. *TAC* is published 24 times per year, biweekly (except for January and August) for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (24 issues) in the U.S., \$54.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$69.97 other foreign (U.S. funds). Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

**For subscription orders, payments, and other subscription inquiries—**

By phone: **800-579-6148**  
(outside the U.S./Canada 856-488-5321)

Via Web: [www.amconmag.com](http://www.amconmag.com)

By mail: *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

When ordering a subscription please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery of your first issue and all subscription transactions.

Inquiries and letters the editor should be sent to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com). For advertising sales/editorial call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on June 10, 2004.

Copyright 2004 *The American Conservative*.

[a man in full]

# We Shall Not See His Like Again

Not all political lives end in failure.

**By Patrick J. Buchanan**

“HOPEFUL, BIG-HEARTED, IDEALISTIC—daring, decent and fair.” So Ronald Reagan said of America in his second inaugural. And so it shall be said of him.

He came from another time and place, Ronald Reagan did, a time long ago when love of country was as natural for a boy growing up in Illinois as was a faith that nothing was beyond the capacity of the great and good people whence he had come.

He had a lifelong love affair with America, with her history, heroes, stories, and legends. Now he is one of those legends.

In life and as an actor, he relished romantic and heroic roles, whether as the lifeguard who pulled 77 swimmers to safety, the legendary “Gipper” of Knute Rockne’s Notre Dame, or the statesman who walked out of a summit in Iceland rather than compromise the security of the country he had been elected to protect.

When America began to tear herself apart over morality, race, and Vietnam in the 1960s, the old certitudes he articulated and the old virtues he personified held a magnetic attraction for a people bewildered by what was happening to their country. When he spoke, he took

us to a higher ground, above petty and partisan squabbles and divisions, where we could dream and be one people again.

In the crushing defeat of Barry Goldwater in 1964, Reagan’s speech of blazing defiance vaulted him into the leadership of the conservative movement. And after Watergate and the loss of Vietnam, with the Soviet Empire rampant and America held hostage, the country, unready for Ronald Reagan or conservatism in 1964, took a chance in 1980. And when she did, America won the lottery.

With the help of tough Paul Volcker at the Federal Reserve, Ronald Reagan’s tax cuts, once they took effect in 1983, ignited a 17-year boom unlike any in the 20th century. America was back.

His sunny persona, his grace under fire after the attempt on his life, endeared him forever to his countrymen. When he came out of the anesthesia after the surgery to remove the bullet so near his heart, he looked up at the nervous nurses hovering over him and said, “Okay, let’s do the whole scene over again, beginning at the hotel.”

His resolve to restore the morale and the might of the armed forces he loved,

of which he was commander in chief, converted millions to conservatism and created a new constituency all his own: the Reagan Democrats. I do not know if Ronald Reagan would have cared that they named that big new building in Washington after him, but he sure would have loved that aircraft carrier.

In the 1960s, it was a handicap in a presidential campaign to be a conservative. Republicans shied away from the label that a hostile media had equated with extremism. With Reagan, it was an honor. He was never embarrassed or ashamed at being a man of the Right. He was as proud of it as we were to have such a leader.

Every year he would speak at the Conservative Political Action Committee. In every State of the Union he demanded that a line be inserted calling for an amendment to the Constitution to protect the life of the unborn. He believed God had spared him and that the time left to him was to be spent doing God’s work here on earth.

Where other politicians avoided battles over philosophy and principle, Reagan relished that conflict. Nominated in 1980, he demanded a “no pale pastels” platform—then ran on it.



He had a wonderful sense of humor and loved stories. Seconds before going out to face the press in primetime news conferences that 80 million Americans and the whole world would watch, he was still telling jokes. He was devoid of ego and of the boastfulness so common in this capital. "There is no limit to how far a man can go," read a plaque in his office, "so long as he is willing to let someone else get the credit."

Yet he was proud of what he had accomplished. His friend and barber Milt Pitts told that me that when last he saw Ronald Reagan, the ex-president mused that he had come to Washington do to five things: cut taxes, rebuild America's military might, unleash the American economy from the burden of government, lead America and the West to face the challenge of the Soviet Empire—and balance the budget. "Four out of five ain't bad!" he told Milt.

He was a big man who could concede a mistake and who had the largeness of character to change course. Persuaded to put Marines into Lebanon a second time, after they had escorted the PLO out, he watched in horror as 241 were killed in the terrorist attack on their Beirut barracks. He used U.S. airpower and the *USS New Jersey* to retaliate. But then he withdrew the Marines.

Some still insist he should have retaliated more violently and intervened more massively. But Ronald Reagan realized he had put U.S. Marines at risk in a civil war that was not our war, and so he accepted the onus of his greatest mistake rather than compound it.

On only two other occasions did he use U.S. military force. In Grenada, when Marxist thugs murdered the prime minister of that Caribbean island and posed a threat to American medical students, and in retaliation for Khadafi's bombing of the La Belle discotheque in Berlin, where an American soldier died and dozens were wounded.

While the liberation of Grenada is today disparaged, it was the first time in the Cold War the United States recaptured territory from the Soviet Empire. It swept a Soviet pawn off the chessboard and shocked Castro's Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua because it sent a message that, in the last analysis, you criminals continue to exist only at the sufferance of the United States. And should we come for you, your friends in Moscow will not save you.

Before taking office, Reagan was depicted as a war-monger. In office he proved himself a fearless statesman but also a leader of prudence, determined to avoid war with the Soviet Empire, for he knew in his heart time was on America's side in the Cold War.

Thus, he checkmated Moscow's mass deployment of SS-20 missiles trained on Western Europe by targeting hundreds of Pershing and cruise missiles on Eastern Europe and Moscow. When the Soviets agreed to take their missiles down, if we would pull our missiles out, Reagan agreed to the first great arms-reduction treaty of the Cold War.

When Poland's General Jaruzelski, on Moscow's orders, crushed Solidarity, some of us urged Reagan to put Warsaw in default on its foreign debts and destroy the credit rating of Soviet bloc. Reagan declined. He considered the crushing of Solidarity but a temporary setback in a struggle the outcome of which was foreordained by the superiority of the United States of America and the unquenchable thirst of the people of Eastern Europe for freedom. No need to risk confrontation. Time was on our side.

In the Cold War, Reagan always exhibited what Mark Twain called the "calm

confidence of a Christian with four aces."

What did he achieve? Ronald Reagan let the American eagle soar. He cut tax rates from 70 to 28 percent, restored our spirit, rebuilt the armed forces into the most formidable the world had ever seen, and led us to bloodless victory in the Cold War. God bless him.

*Time* declared Mikhail Gorbachev Man of the Decade. America knows better. Branded by a hostile liberal city "an amiable dunce," he paid no heed. Ronald Reagan was more concerned with what his friends at *Human Events* wrote about him than what his adversaries at the *Washington Post* or *New York Times* said about him.

He was warned that his determination to challenge the Soviet Empire philosophically and strategically in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua, risked war. Yet this 70-year-old man who began his presidency calling the Soviet Union an Evil Empire ended it strolling through Red Square arm-in-arm with the last leader of that empire.

A British statesman once said all political lives end in failure. As always, Ronald Reagan is the exception. We shall not see his like again. ■



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

[strength & peace]

# American Realist

Hefting a big stick, using it sparingly

By Doug Bandow

ALZHEIMER'S ROBBED Ronald Reagan of knowledge of the world around him, but his policies continue to shape that world. Even before his death, the scramble had begun to claim his legacy.

Most obviously, George W. Bush has sought to don the Reagan mantle as he advances his foreign policy of global social engineering: aggressive war to impose democracy and preventive war against any country posing the vaguest potential threat to America. "Bush, like Reagan, is waging a battle against evil," writes Frank Gaffney of the Center for Security Policy.

There is a superficial similarity between the two presidents: tough, no-nonsense hawks pushing the U.S. to take on all comers. But the details of their policies are dramatically different.

Ronald Reagan believed in hefting a big military stick, but used it only sparingly. Even as he rejected allied policies, Reagan sought to preserve allied relations. He recognized that circumstances changed and policies failed and shifted course accordingly.

And Reagan passionately believed in the importance of ideas and husbanded rather than squandered America's credibility. When Ronald Reagan left office the U.S. truly did stand tall, a far cry from its status today as an isolated, distrusted giant. President Reagan likely would have been horrified: the

U.S. initiating war on a lie and then finding itself caught in an unnecessary guerrilla war that has made the West less secure and America more hated by more people than at any point in its history.

When Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, the Cold War raged unabated. Although in retrospect we know the USSR was weaker than it looked, America faced serious security challenges the world over. Reagan responded by strengthening U.S. military capabilities. And then using them almost not at all.

Instead, he employed a strategy of "appeasement." For instance, even as Reagan moved to bolster U.S. military forces after taking office, he dropped the grain embargo against the Soviet Union. There were obvious economic and political reasons to do so, but Reagan also cited the goal of encouraging "meaningful and constructive dialogue."

Reagan confronted the Soviets in Afghanistan and Soviet clients in Central America, but only indirectly, through proxies. Thus, American aid to the mujahedeen and Contras. He rebuffed the European allies over Nicaragua, but never tarnished transatlantic relationships with dismissive name-calling.

Similar was Reagan's approach to Poland. The Gdansk shipyard electrician Lech Walesa and his Solidarity movement spurred hope of freedom. But memories of prior political awaken-



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

ings that ended disastrously were revived when the Polish military cracked down in 1981.

Washington's response? "Appeasement." No military action, no threats, not even economic sanctions. Instead, Reagan backed his tough attitude toward the Soviets by allowing private forces stealthily to undermine the Polish communist regime: Pope John Paul II's dramatic moral challenge, financial assistance from U.S. labor unions, and smuggled literature and books from groups including my own Cato Institute.



The Reagan administration was always willing to talk to the Soviets. Of course, President Reagan preferred to negotiate from a position of strength, which caused him to push the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles, despite the opposition of many Europeans. And he succeeded, achieving a deft diplomatic triumph. Three years later, the U.S. and Soviet Union negotiated the withdrawal of both sides' missiles.

Reagan's ultimate goal was always a reduction in armaments. Write Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, authors of the new book *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*: "from 1983 onward, Reagan devoted more of his foreign policy time to arms control than to any other subject." Reagan's commitment to radical disarmament was evident in his push for a space-based missile defense and the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons.

The latter objective might have been unrealistic, but it demonstrated that Reagan was pushing not domination through American military power but peace through international co-operation. In 1988, Reagan spoke eloquently about peace as well as freedom in a speech to students at Moscow State University. No wonder Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* magazine, earlier had denounced Reagan for "appeasement by any other name."

Equally important, Ronald Reagan recognized when circumstances changed and when those changes required the modification of U.S. policy. Again, the Soviet Union—which posed the gravest security threat to America for nearly a half century—offers the most obvious example.

Reagan correctly saw the struggle against communism in moral terms. He challenged what was truly an Evil Empire at its philosophical roots. He also understood the enormous productivity of a free people in a free economic

system and sought to unleash that economic power through tax cuts and deregulation. The entrepreneurial explosion that he helped spark left the decrepit Soviet bloc ever further behind.

But Reagan recognized that Mikhail Gorbachev was different from earlier murderous Communist Party general secretaries. Reagan started with "trust but verify," forming a critical partnership with the one man in the USSR who could keep the soldiers in their barracks. Gorbachev might have hoped to preserve a more humane version of the Soviet Union, but no matter. He ensured that the Cold War ended peacefully. In June 1987, President Reagan stood before Berlin's Brandenburg Gate and demanded: "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" And Gorbachev essentially did so, just 17 months later.

Notably, Gorbachev gives Reagan credit. After Reagan's death, Gorbachev wrote in the *New York Times*: "I don't know whether we would have been able to agree and to insist on the implementation of our agreements with a different person at the helm of American government. True, Reagan was a man of the

incumbent left-wing government. Although Grenada posed few security threats, the administration did eliminate a potential Soviet ally in America's backyard while safeguarding Americans who filled the local medical school. Most important, the U.S. went home and left the island to nutmeg production.

After receiving what the administration said was irrefutable evidence—which actually seems to have been irrefutable evidence—of Libyan complicity in the bombing of a Berlin nightclub filled with Americans, Reagan retaliated in 1986. He neither staged an invasion nor engaged in nation-building. Instead, he sent the clear message that any attack on the U.S. would reap a severe response.

Finally, there was Lebanon. Intervening was one of the worst decisions of his presidency, and the one closest to neo-conservative precepts. In an attempt to aid Israel, which had invaded its northern neighbor, President Reagan committed the U.S. on the side of the minority Christian government in a civil war. More than 300 Americans died after bombings at the U.S. embassy and Marine Corps barracks. At this point Reagan demonstrated how he differed

HE NEITHER **STAGED AN INVASION** NOR ENGAGED IN **NATION-BUILDING**. INSTEAD, HE SENT THE CLEAR MESSAGE THAT **ANY ATTACK ON THE U.S. WOULD REAP A SEVERE RESPONSE**.

right. But, while adhering to his convictions, with which one could agree or disagree, he was not dogmatic; he was looking for negotiations and cooperation." Reagan chose "negotiations and cooperation" even as some conservatives were warning of KGB tricks and disinformation.

Of course, Reagan did employ the military, but only three times in combat. Once was in Grenada, after a hard-line communist *coup d'état* ousted the

from President George W. Bush: he recognized that he had made a mistake, and he changed policy.

Today neoconservatives routinely lump Reagan's retreat from Lebanon with Clinton's withdrawal from Somalia and failure to retaliate for the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia and the *USS Cole* in Yemen as "appeasement" that encouraged terrorists. Podhoretz, for instance, denounced Reagan for "having cut and run."

Yet what could the U.S. have done in Lebanon? Half-hearted intervention on behalf of one faction in a tragic but irrelevant civil war had failed; deeper involvement would have achieved nothing. The only alternative was Iraq-lite: invasion, occupation, and reconstruction, which would have inflamed the Muslim world, stoked the fires of terrorism, and forced American soldiers to fight a meaningless guerrilla war 20 years early.

Ronald Reagan, in contrast to George W. Bush, understood that such a policy exceeded America's power and was not in America's interest. So he redeployed the troops on ships that soon sailed for home. That was the Reagan administration's last attempt at nation-building.

Out of this awful mistake we see Reagan's strengths: commitment to an ally, desire to bring a better life to foreign peoples, and pragmatic response to violent reality. His ends did not change, but Reagan readily adjusted the means. He always saw America as a shining city on a hill, an international force for good that could best convince others to seek freedom rather than force a particular form of democratic governance upon them.

Today U.S. foreign policy lies in ruin. America's troops are dying in an unnecessary occupation; America's actions are spurring more terrorists to take up arms; America's credibility is in tatters around the world. The only unity that the Bush administration's aggressive policies have encouraged is between Shi'ites and Sunnis in Iraq against America and among virtually everyone else around the globe against Washington. This is a world very different from the one bequeathed by Ronald Reagan. ■

*Doug Bandow is a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan. The author and editor of several books, Bandow also is a member of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy.*

## At the Pleasure of The President

I was Reagan's man.

**By James G. Watt**

FEW MEN IN HISTORY have known their God-given assignment with the clarity that Ronald Reagan understood his. And fewer still accomplish their assignments with the flair and the impact that he did.

Like many who went to Washington "with Reagan," I had not known him personally, socially, or even politically. And yet instinctively, I tracked with him. For conservatives across the country, he was the personification of long-dormant ideals—the drive for assured freedom, smaller government, lower taxes—and thousands rallied to his cause.

There are many who have been "the president" but only one who can be called "The President." I ran the Department of the Interior with his generous and broad delegation of authority, but I was never my own man. I was always Reagan's man at Interior.

We warriors under his command recognized that this President had received unusual strength to be undeterred by opposition. So we returned a full measure of loyalty, trusting his leadership in what became the Reagan Revolution. He owned our devotion and extended the same—to me, to others, at his own expense, when it was neither deserved nor expected. When resistance rolled in, he was there with an encouraging phone call or a note. He gave direction from the Oval Office or stand-up conversations in the Cabinet room. He defended us in the public arena when the media or members of Congress turned up the political

pressure. He won our respect and carried our Revolution.

My first meeting with Reagan was in the Blair House, where he interviewed me as a possible Secretary of the Interior. After he outlined what he wanted his appointee to do, he looked me in the eye and asked, "Can you and your wife take the personal abuse that will come at you?" By some combination of innocence and ignorance, I answered that we could. Two decades later, I realize that I had no understanding of what this caring, concerned President-elect was alerting me to.

The political hostilities came, just as The President knew they would, and, in addition, I came under personal attack for my Christian commitment. Frequently, I would get a phone call in my office at about 7:30 a.m. from Bill Clark, Ed Meese, or Jim Baker saying something to the effect of, "Jim, I have just been with The President. He has seen what the press is saying and wants you to stand tough and not give an inch." Those calls always seemed to come on my lowest days. They were part of the fuel that kept me going.

That was the warm side of The President. But he was steel as well. I learned how firm his resolve could be on an early September day when I was summoned to the Oval Office.

I was bringing about the massive change that The President had promised the American people during his campaign as it related to the management of

the federal lands, about one-third of the America's land mass. I had determined not to issue a particular permit that had been properly requested in my home state of Wyoming. It would have been legally permissible to issue the permit, but it was opposed by a handful of interest groups, most of the Democrats, and, of course, the press. In addition, my three good friends in the Wyoming Congressional delegation—Sen. Alan Simpson, the second-ranking Republican in the United States Senate; Sen. Malcolm Wallop, chairman of my most important Senate committee; and our lone congressman, Dick Cheney, the number-three Republican in the House of Representatives and now our vice president—all opposed the issuing of the permit.

The President learned of the matter and asked to see me. I had not wanted the negative press and the growing hostilities on Capitol Hill caused by the massive changes we were implementing at the Department of the Interior to bring any embarrassment to The President or the White House. With great hesitation, I entered the Oval Office for my scheduled 15-minute meeting. Would President Reagan criticize my aggressive-ness? Would he ask me to back off?

After a very brief presentation of the basic issues he said, "Jim, why are you going to deny the permit?" I responded, "For three good reasons: Simpson, Wallop, and Cheney."

The President said, "Jim, if you don't do it, who will? If not now, when?"

In that instant, I was transported back to my youth. I saw myself as a small boy standing before my mom and dad and hearing, "James, you do what is right because it is right." There I was, sitting in the Oval Office of the White House, and The President was giving me that same parental message, "Do what is right because it is right." In Reagan's mind everything—politics, the press, and the requests of special friends—was

subordinated to that simple obligation to principle.

He did not speak in a torrent; he delivered a message. He could snap problems into perspective in the fewest words. His famous stories were not an actor's performance pieces: they were never meant to aggrandize him but to inspire us. He had a sense of timing, not just for the punch line, but for America. And he kept at his task: deliver the message, now.

The President then asked about the other controversial issues of the Department of the Interior, and for the next 45 minutes we discussed them. He was engaged, perceptive, shrewd, and I walked out of the Oval Office determined never to retreat from those issues that we determined to be right. His courage was that infectious.

I still recall an evening when my wife Leilani and I were invited to a private dinner party in President and Mrs.

Reagan's private quarters of the White House. After the meal The President showed us around the home. On a wall hung the original work of Francis Scott Key's "The Star Spangled Banner," our National Anthem. I told The President that I had worked into my speeches the fact that "The Star Spangled Banner's" first stanza ends with a question, "O say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and home of the brave?"

That question demands an answer each day. The President responded in his classic way—a sideways nod and emotion-filled eyes. And I knew that he had determined long ago to answer "yes." No one has championed freedom and liberty for America and the world more than The President—Ronald Reagan. ■

---

*James G. Watt was President Reagan's first Secretary of the Interior.*

# He Spoke For Us

He took his principles seriously, not himself.

**By Ken Khachigian**

EVEN THOUGH I no longer formally served on the White House Staff, I was called upon many times during President Reagan's eight years in office to help with one of the President's important speeches. In furtherance of Mrs. Reagan's "Just Say No" crusade, the First Couple planned jointly to deliver a primetime television address against drug abuse. Thus, on Aug. 29, 1986, I was ushered into his suite at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles to prepare for this unique and historic presentation.

The President was wearing one of his trademark western shirts and casual cotton pants with a large cowboy buckle on his belt and was waiting for Mrs. Reagan to join us for lunch. As his aide Jim Kuhn and White House photographer Pete Souza walked in with me, the President said, "Well ... hi. Was just getting ready to test this out," as he tore off a piece of the paper airplane in his hand.

He looked over at Souza and, grinning mischievously, said, "Now, you better not take pictures—using White House



stationery is probably illegal.” But the photographer replied that the scene was too good to pass up. All four of us went to the balcony and leaned over as the Leader of the Free World pitched his paper aircraft over the side. As we craned our necks, it drifted slowly down the 29 stories in a beautiful arc onto a construction site below.

The commander in chief was disappointed, claiming that an earlier launch had picked up some wind, flew out several hundred feet, and returned. It turns out that there had been several sorties. Pat Buchanan told me later he found one of the errant flights on his own balcony. This one was caught by the camera, and the evidence of “illegality” now hangs proudly on my wall.

Vintage Reagan.

Just because he was President of the United States didn’t mean he couldn’t have fun. Unpretentious. Unselfconscious. Normal. He often reminded me, as he did others on his staff, “One does not become President but only holds temporary custody of that office.”

Thus, as custodian, he only took his principles seriously, not himself. And thank God he did. It was the ideas—the prairie fire going west to east—that got him into the White House.

We must never lose track of *why* Dutch was the Great Communicator. It was because, as a gifted speaker, he communicated great ideas. “It’s not that they want me,” he would say of the voters as he campaigned across America, “they want my ideas.” He knew the difference between mere oratory and committed principles.

This was made clear to me in January 1981 as I worked on a draft of the President’s first inaugural address, and his closest political ally, Nevada Sen. Paul Laxalt, called me to report that many of our conservative friends were concerned that Reagan might be persuaded to water down his campaign pledges.

Laxalt asked me to ensure that the President’s inaugural would reassure our friends.

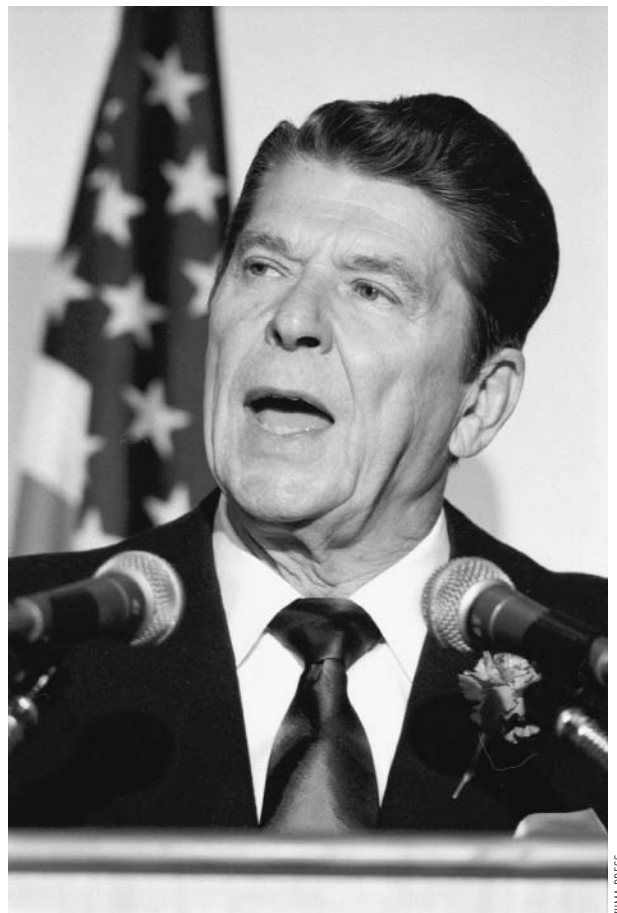
Shortly thereafter, the President directed me to pen these lines into the speech: “It is time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back with-in its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden .... [t]hese will be our first priorities, and on these principles there will be no compromise.”

I also learned to trust the President’s instincts, even when I thought they weren’t expressing a position I expected of him. I flew into Washington in the fall of 1985 to help with editing on his address to the United Nations General Assembly. It was, I believed, an opportunity to show some muscle to the recalcitrant Soviets a month before the summit meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva.

When five of us (including Buchanan) gathered in the Oval Office to get the President’s feedback on the first draft, I was taken aback by his objections to a number of harder-line sentiments. I was convinced that he had been talked out of strong language by wobbly staff at the National Security Council.

The President began explaining that if we were to have a different relationship with the Soviet Union and achieve agreements, then we had to adopt a tone that indicated that our societies differed but that we were not out to threaten or change their system. The facts of our distinctions as nations would speak for themselves. Bottom line: tone down the rhetoric.

In fact, there was no question that Ronald Reagan was determined to



change their system, and that was the end product of his presidency. He had simply decided that, on this occasion, the theme would be: in spite of our differences we can still talk. There were fits and starts—and much turbulence—in the process. But something in Reagan saw an opportunity to get where he wanted to go by a slightly different path. It’s hard to argue with success.

And “not arguing with success” surely ought to be a solid remembrance of the Reagan era. Clark Clifford, viewed by the Washington swells as the personification of national wisdom, called Ronald Reagan an “amiable dunce.” He was not the first, nor the last, of a long line of pretentious poseurs whose failed political theories would litter the salons of Georgetown and Chevy Chase.

Damned right he was amiable. But it was not the dunce cap, but the cowboy hat that far better suited this American original. ■

*Ken Khachigian was chief speechwriter and senior political advisor to President Reagan.*

# Capitalist Revolution

Ronald Reagan defeated socialism at home, too.

By Paul Craig Roberts

RONALD REAGAN was elected president largely because of what President Jimmy Carter called the “malaise” of the American economy. A quarter century ago, the economy was mired in “stagflation.” Efforts by policymakers to spur economic growth drove up inflation more than employment. Efforts to restrain inflation drove up unemployment with little impact on the rate of inflation. It was a matter of great concern that these “Phillips curve” tradeoffs between employment and inflation were worsening with each economic cycle. In a widely read article, “More Inflation, More Unemployment,” economist Milton Friedman noted the complete breakdown of Keynesian demand-management economic policy.

The economy’s problems had serious implications for U.S. domestic and foreign policy. Social Security, a pay-as-you-go pension system, was threatened by inadequate growth in real tax revenues. To avoid the Soviet Union achieving a supremacy that might reduce the risks of aggression, the U.S. faced an expensive arms race. An economy ensnared in stagflation could not meet these and other demands.

The Keynesian economic establishment had no solution other than an “incomes policy,” which meant regulation by Washington not only of all prices but also of wages, salaries, and professional fees. With experience of controlling one price—oil—fresh in everyone’s minds, to extend the regulation to all prices was regarded as a fate worse than stagflation.

The malaise of the U.S. economy, and also the economies of the UK and Europe generally, was a great source of comfort to Soviet leaders, mired as they were in intractable economic problems of their own. American economic difficulty encouraged the Soviets to continue the struggle for supremacy.

Few Americans realize, even today, that it was President Reagan’s economic policy, not a military buildup, that won the Cold War by rejuvenating capitalism. Reagan startled Soviet leaders, as well as American economists, when he declared that U.S. economic problems were not inherent in capitalism but were the results of the wrong policies and could easily be fixed by changing policy.

All that was necessary to repair the broken American economy, said Reagan, was to reverse the policy mix. Keynesian demand management used monetary expansion to stimulate consumer demand and high tax rates to restrain inflation. Reagan’s revolutionary supply-side message was that high tax rates were restraining real output while money growth pumped up demand. Restraining real output held down job growth, and pumping up demand exacerbated inflation. The solution, Reagan said, was simple: use monetary policy to control inflation and tax-rate reductions to stimulate real output.

The message to the Soviets was clear. If the U.S. economy could be fixed, but the Soviet economy could not, then the battle for supremacy was over. Reagan’s economic message ushered in the era of

Soviet economic and political reform. The Soviet reforms were unsuccessful, but the era of *perestroika* brought to light information and made possible criticism that undermined the confidence of Soviet leaders and the Soviet people in their system. It was the internal collapse of Soviet confidence that brought down the USSR, not a U.S. military buildup and arms agreements between Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Reagan’s supply-side policy threatened the human capital of the Keynesian establishment. Long accustomed to thinking of tax cuts as a demand-side measure to stimulate consumer spending, the entire economics profession, along with the Federal Reserve, many Republican senators, and many in Reagan’s own government, assaulted Reagan’s policy with predictions of accelerating inflation that would drive up interest rates, crowd out investment, and worsen stagflation. As Reagan had inherited a double-digit rate of inflation, the prediction of accelerating inflation was so alarming that it drove up long-term interest rates to record levels.

Reagan, however, was not intimidated. He stuck to his policy. Tax rates were reduced and monetary policy was restrained. The result was a record economic expansion while the rate of inflation fell. The “Phillips curve” tradeoffs between employment and inflation disappeared just as supply-side economists predicted.

In January 1989, I compared the first 58 months of the Reagan recovery to the

previous recovery, which had lasted 58 months. From March 1975 through January 1980 (the beginning and end of the expansion from the 1974 recession), the unemployment rate fell 27 percent, the consumer price index (CPI) rose 48 percent (about twice as much as the unemployment rate fell), and gross private domestic investment rose 50 percent.

In contrast, from November 1982 through September 1987, the unemployment rate fell 45 percent (about twice as much as the previous recovery), the CPI rose 17 percent (only one-third as much as the previous recovery), and gross private domestic investment grew 77 percent (about 50 percent more than the previous recovery).

The Reagan economy was remarkable in other ways. It produced the highest manufacturing productivity growth in the postwar period, averaging 4.6 per-

cent annually from the beginning of the recovery in 1982, compared with 2.3 percent in the 1970s, 2.7 percent in the 1960s, and 2 percent in the 1950s.

## EXCEPT FOR VODKA SALES, THE SOVIET ECONOMY HAD NOT GROWN FOR 20 YEARS.

cent annually from the beginning of the recovery in 1982, compared with 2.3 percent in the 1970s, 2.7 percent in the 1960s, and 2 percent in the 1950s.

The claim that Reagan had cut taxes for the rich was disproved by IRS data showing that the share of federal income taxes paid by the top 1 percent rose from 18.1 percent in 1981 to 26.1 percent in 1986—a 44 percent increase—while the share of taxes paid by the bottom 50 percent fell from 7.5 percent to 6.4 percent.

The success of Reagan's policy threatened to elevate a handful of supply-side economists above the Nobel Prize winners of the Keynesian establishment. No such indignity could be permitted. As supply-side voices were few, it was easy for the establishment to control the explanations. Many myths were created by academics, by Democratic politicians such as

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and even by Reagan's former budget director David Stockman, myths that were endlessly repeated by obliging pundits.

One of the most successful myths was that the Reagan administration made a "Laffer curve" revenue forecast that the tax-rate reductions would pay for themselves by recovering the lost revenues through higher economic growth. The "Reagan deficits" were said to be proof that supply-side economics had failed.

Two decades later economists and journalists continue to repeat this myth as gospel truth. Yet every official document shows that no such forecast was made. The budget was based on a traditional static revenue estimate that the tax cuts would lose revenues dollar for dollar. The loss of revenue from the tax cuts was placed at \$718.2 billion over the 1981-86 period.

As the Reagan administration anticipated the revenue loss from the tax-rate reductions, why did the budget deficits occur? The answer is that inflation fell faster than forecast, wiping out \$2.4 trillion in nominal GNP during 1982-86, a dramatic reduction in the tax base. The Reagan budget forecast was controversial because it predicted rising economic growth and a falling rate of inflation—a "Phillips curve" impossibility. When the impossible happened and inflation fell even faster than forecast, it built into the budget higher levels of real spending than the administration had intended.

The budget deficits resulted because the supply-side policy was more successful in reducing inflation than the Reagan administration predicted. Since the budget deficits themselves were the direct consequence of unanticipated disinflation, the deficits could not possibly

cause the higher inflation that so many economists mistakenly predicted.

By 1988 it was clear that the U.S. economy had escaped from malaise. But the Soviet economy had not. On Feb. 17, 1988, Gorbachev reported to the Central Committee of the Communist Party that, except for vodka sales and the higher prices paid for Soviet oil, the Soviet economy had not grown for 20 years.

Shortly thereafter the publication of Soviet economist Abel Aganbegyan's report on the failed Soviet economy signaled that the Cold War was over: "In the period 1981-85 there was practically no economic growth. Unprecedented stagnation and crisis occurred, during the period 1979-82, when production of 40% of all industrial goods actually fell. Agriculture declined (throughout this period it failed to reach the 1978 output levels). The use of productive resources sharply declined and the rate of growth of all indicators of efficiency in social production slowed down, in effect the productivity of labor did not increase."

By rejuvenating capitalism, Reagan destroyed world socialism. The UK and France privatized their economies and reduced tax rates. China's leaders reversed course, declaring, "it is good to be rich." The revolutionary re-emergence of private property out of socialism and communism is a historical watershed.

Reagan changed the world, because he did not believe capitalism was a spent force. He liberated our economy from the "Phillips curve" and chased away the malaise that had paralyzed the Carter administration and given hope to Soviet leaders. ■

---

*Paul Craig Roberts is the author of The Supply-Side Revolution and Meltdown: Inside the Soviet Economy. He drafted the original Kemp-Roth tax rate reduction bill and served as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy during 1981-82.*



# Postcard from the Edge

Iraq's neighbors share our interest in regional stability.

**By Jim Pittaway**

ON A LEAFY Amman side street, tucked in behind the French Ambassador's residence, the charming, quiet Hisham Hotel had, in the space of 24 hours, been transformed into something between a disaster command post and a crisis shelter. The smell of chain-smoked cigarettes mingled with the stench of too many bodies, far too long unwashed, crammed into the tiny reception area and the modest coffee shop. Cell phones clicked, and the hum of conversation was punctuated with tears of relief and cries of anxiety as humanitarian-aid workers, who had been running the gauntlet of militias, gunmen, gangs, and terrified trigger-happy U.S. troops as they fled Iraq, called around frantically seeking information on their colleagues fleeing the chaos.

In Amman to write about the situation in Iraq, for me their arrival meant a mother lode of firsthand information that could not possibly have been more current or relevant. I was surprised by their initial hostility toward someone identified as a journalist—that was a new experience for me—but it helped that I had spent some years as one of them and I had been prudent enough to bring a half-dozen issues of this magazine. So, after considerable re-introduction, they talked.

When the Marines surrounded Fallujah and began blasting their way in, a number of unanticipated events began to occur. As the civilian death toll rose, a rash of kidnappings of Western civilians began in retaliation. This was reported,

but important consequences were not. According to my fellow guests, the security situation for humanitarian workers went from caution to immediate evacuation by any available means within 72 hours. The Red Cross, Save the Children, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and Doctors Without Borders (MSF) all were checking in downstairs while upstairs war “critic” Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) was explaining to Larry King how that pocket of resistance in Fallujah just had to be eliminated to teach those terrorists a lesson and to deprive the bad guys of a “rallying point”—and if more troops were needed, well, it was high time they got sent.

Back downstairs, the red-eyed AFSC team leader folded his cell phone shut and confirmed to his relieved colleagues that the last of both their and MSF's personnel were out of country. He turned to me and said, “MSF pulled out, and this last group was working in Irbil [in supposedly secure Kurdish Iraq]. That's how bad things are in there.” When I told him what Rockefeller had said, his only comment was, “So I guess those idiots don't just want us out, they must want every single Iraqi who has ever worked with any of us to get his throat cut.”

Not one of these veterans of Bosnia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and conflicts dating back to Vietnam had ever seen a security situation deteriorate so rapidly nationwide. All agreed this tactic of targeting civilian foreigners had been centrally co-ordinated, objective-driven, 100

percent effective, and was employable at any time, anywhere in the Muslim world. The Romans could not have run an empire if citizens could not live, work, and engage in commerce in the provinces, but evidently Rockefeller and Wolfowitz cannot comprehend anything as simple-minded as this. Halliburton may well have its very own private air-mobile regimental combat team, complete with intelligence capabilities, interrogators, and special-ops, but even they cannot operate if foreign contract-workers cannot live in the region.

More unanticipated fallout from Fallujah involved the reaction of various coalition partners who, according to several sources, went to Paul Bremer and Gen. Ricardo Sanchez and said something like this: “Excuse us, sirs, but collective punishment is a serious no-no under the laws of warfare. Your generals have announced their intent to ‘teach these people a lesson’ and reduce their town to rubble if Fallujans don't ‘turn over the perpetrators’ of crimes you allege, perhaps, as you have also said, for execution. That Ariel Sharon gets away with this kind of thing won't help us in the international courts and conventions to which, unlike him, we are signatories and participants. Our exposure out here does not extend to war crimes and if you persist, you will be very much on your own.” Or something like that. This business of telling the U.S. it may find itself on its own is becoming an increasingly high-value card among nervous coali-

tion and Governing Council members as the military situation worsens and other problems emerge from the legion of miscalculations made by the architects of this war.

So the tactical plan for denying sanctuary to an Arab urban insurgency went into the toilet, both because it would not work and because our allies vetoed it. Unfortunately, events have demonstrated that our generals lack alternative training or the imagination necessary to produce Plan B. This is a tactical and strategic defeat that guarantees the adversary has sanctuary, and he knows it. Deprived of Likud military tactics, Bremer's successors will have to rely on Likud negotiating methods to dislodge the "terrorists." Enter the "peace partners with whom we can deal"—courtesy of the Republican Guard.

A briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Amman on April 19 painted a grim picture for the near-term future of Iraq. The prospect that any humanitarian operations could resume in the foreseeable future was essentially nil. Worse, the Jordanian truckers who were bringing in the food, medicine, clothing, shelter, and other essentials were no longer willing to cross the border for any amount of money. Projections were that by early summer such supplies as were ware-

of clean food, water, medicine, and electricity disappearing. Who needs tribal and religious upheaval when you can have a good, old-fashioned bread riot? The handful of dead-enders, foreign terrorists, religious fanatics, and other opponents of progress, democracy, freedom, and the New Iraq should have fun with this.

Curious, I asked why CNN or the BBC did not deem the sudden mass exodus of all the relief and humanitarian workers worthy of mention. Didn't they know? Did they think it wasn't important? The responses I got shed interesting light on this war and how it is conducted and reported. When I saw the pictures from Abu Ghraib I wasn't particularly surprised.

In any other conflict I have witnessed, relations between working journalists and the humanitarian cadre have been excellent. Usually fluent in the local language, always apprised of native attitudes, full of real anecdotes, genuine indigenous contacts, and hard facts that reflect the best kind of information an analyst can get his hands on, the humanitarian-aid workers have always been a central portion of the information pie in my analytical world. (They are not to be confused with "human-rights workers," who generally have no local knowledge or experience beyond the frontiers of

media relationships do not exist, which I found surprising as well as disturbing. So the truth is, CNN probably didn't know that the humanitarian workers had been run out. Why?

The problem emerged after the invasion phase ended, when it became clear that security was not going to be established. It was then that the news agencies were forced to retain "private security consultants" to protect their correspondents, staff, and property. Our journalists became "embedded" with someone quite different from good old GI Joe, people described by the humanitarian workers as "cowboys," "mercenaries," "gunmen," "thugs," and, most accurately in my opinion, "the real foreign fighters." As one old veteran, an original Peace Corps volunteer, commented, "With their reflector sunglasses, opaque windows, and the violent suddenness with which they descend out of nowhere, reveling in the panic and terror they produce, they remind me of nothing so much as Papa Doc Duvalier's Tonton Macoutes."

Just gassing up the SUV's and satellite trucks so the NBC crew can go shoot some street scenes resembles some parody of a commando raid that would be better placed in a video game. The security vehicles slam into the gas station and the consultants whip out their automatic weapons, set up a perimeter, shove the locals out of the way, and signal the vans to gas up. The threat of violence, intimidation, and a cultivated air of brutality accompany every move the network reporters make. They probably have no choice but to operate this way but not to disclose the bizarre and alienating limitations of their everyday working conditions is really a kind of cover-up. And to maintain the pretense that any undistorted or even useful information is getting out of Iraq under these circumstances is its own little war crime.

## WHO NEEDS TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS UPEHAVAL WHEN YOU CAN HAVE A GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED BREAD RIOT?

housed in the country would be exhausted. The humanitarian crisis so well prepared for prior to the invasion was likely to blow up by the end of June unless the security situation completely reversed itself. Nobody would even venture to speculate on the consequences

their own rectitude, nor with the guy on TV who will adopt you your very own kid for \$20 a month.) These aid workers compose a tightly-knit, highly professional international network of "first responders" to humanitarian crises anywhere in the world. In the Iraq War,

While most of the 15,000 or so of these well-trained hired gunmen running unchecked around the New Iraq are undoubtedly men of good character just out to do good while collecting six-figure salaries, the sad truth is that many are not. According to my sources in

their reporting from Afghanistan turned an entire generation of Europeans against them, destroying decades of carefully nurtured front organizations and “peace groups.” It is unlikely that Iraq-based security operatives will have any more success rooting them out than

## THE NOTION OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM MAY NOT SURVIVE THE COMING TALES OF THE EXPLOITS OF THE “CONTRACTORS.”

Amman, plenty of them are there for entirely unwholesome reasons that boil down to fighting—freelance or on behalf of very murky interests—a very dirty war, one they have reason to believe they fight with impunity as well as immunity. In the short run, they may be right about being beyond the reach of law, but in the longer term these things have a way of coming full circle.

Based on the stories I heard in Amman and Beirut, I can safely predict that the CEO of Blackwater Security will come to regret his public comments praising the unique skills of some of the personnel he has recruited from the Chilean and former South African security services. It may be that this matter of private armies and the ambiguities created by the commingling of operations with legitimate and illegitimate occupation troops give shortcuts and advantages that are probably irresistible to beleaguered field commanders. But anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the history of warfare and the genesis of war crimes should shudder at the implications of these arrangements.

The Amman crew confirmed that there are a few journalists in Iraq who have “gone native” and, operating in the journalistic equivalence of “deep cover,” have become obsessed with this story. Mostly Scandinavian, these types were a serious problem for the Soviets because

did the Spetznaz. The notion of American exceptionalism, already on life support in most of the world, may not survive the coming tales of the exploits of the “contractors.”

The humanitarian workers believe that the mainstream reporters and news agencies are entirely compromised by the company they keep. They maintain the Iraqi people live in abject terror of these gunmen and would never trust a journalist if he so much as had a glass of chai with one of these guys in the room. I could not find one person who believed that the four unfortunate “civilian contractors” in the Fallujah incident were there to deliver fresh milk to pre-school children, and in fact I heard people specifically say that they were not. If anyone wonders why the prisoner-abuse story sat for so long after being announced in January, he should look no further than the fraternity of security personnel and the news agencies whose dependency on them is its own kind of captivity.

Amman, with its broad avenues, speed tunnels, and limestone block bunker-style architecture is a sterile place anyway, but now, every few yards there’s a kiosk with two or three bored twentysomethings, lolling around fingering their automatic weapons as they eye passersby, casting a pall over the spontaneity and cacophony that in less fearful times is the hallmark of the Arab

street. The atmosphere of lockdown mirrors the fear and insecurity among the Western diplomatic community and international organizations that is so pervasive as to make journalistic inquiry impossible. Every facility is a fortress, and people don’t venture out and talk. So I moved on to Beirut, hoping the vibrant sociability of the place had returned in the 15 years since the civil war ended.

The gorgeous American University of Beirut bustles with professors, newspapermen, diplomats, and political and religious leaders—all happy to meet for a drink in the Hamra district or proudly show off the beautifully reconstructed downtown. Beneath the giant oaks and eucalyptus that survived the carnage, the miniskirt mingles with the *hijab*. The tee-shirted iPod-decked rapper chats with

### CATHOLIC RELIGION TUTOR CALIFORNIA

Tutor wanted for our family of five home-schooled children, ages 4, 7, 8, 9 and 15. We are looking to give our children a thorough understanding of traditional Catholic Doctrine to help meet the challenges of both secular humanism and materialism. We believe the thousand years following Christ were the high point for Man’s soul.

Very important is a thorough understanding of logic, dialectic and rhetoric. This deeply conservative teacher will join two other tutors presently teaching our children, one the three Rs, and the other Greek and Latin. Excellent salary. Please send résumé to:

**Dexter Ball**  
**P.O. Box 2530**  
**Aptos, CA 95001-2530**



the earnest, Koran-carrying bearded young man fingering his worry-beads as they wait for a town meeting featuring the Sunni Minister of Justice, the Maronite Metropolitan, the infamous Sheik Fadlallah of Hezbollah, and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt. The gulls circle the sun-drenched Corniche where families stroll along the Mediterranean as

This, I suspect, is what the UN's Lakhdar Brahimi has discovered on his recent trips to the region. I also suspect this is what emboldened him to throw down the gauntlet to Ariel Sharon and Abe Foxman: if you can't get rid of me, you'll be sitting on the sidelines when Iraq gets sorted out. And they couldn't get him, which speaks volumes about

Responsible people who make judgments based on fact, probability, and track record do not buy into this nonsense, and these would evidently include British coalition personnel and many in the new Iraqi Provisional Government.

The Iranians' big worry is that the much-ballyhooed Grand Ayatollah Sistani is not much of a leader—more of a “holy man” and professional ascetic—and dangerously indecisive. Now that we have turned the lightly regarded, and very immature al-Sadr into some sort of Pancho Villa, things have become much more complicated. They claim that al-Qaeda knew exactly what it was doing when it blew up Ayatollah Hakim; hence their willingness to work with people like Chalabi, who they hope will be able to assemble coherent Shi'a leadership. They have no worries about how Shi'a power will evolve if events are allowed to proceed in a stable, democratic manner, and neocon rantings about Iran should be subjected to the *cui bono* test.

I was intrigued by Iranian fears that the Kurds will overplay their hand and bring in the Turks. As the diplomat shrugged his elegant London-tailored shoulders, he remarked, “Some who dine too intimately with the Americans tend to get a bit drunk on power. When the banquet is over, and the Americans have moved on, these people can find themselves adrift in waters stirred by their indiscretions.” I suspect this guy had read more of our recent history than most Americans, and these concerns were echoed by other sources. To more than one of its neighbors, Turkey appears to be a country with tremendous interests at stake and no identifiable game plan. The Kurds would be wise to listen to neighbors who are counseling commitment to evolving Iraq.

The list of people who don't want to see Iraq blow up is more impressive than we have been led to believe. It

## BEIRUT IS BACK—CHASTENED, SOBER, AND SUBDUED—BUT PURGED OF THE INFANTILISM AND RAGE THAT ARE THE ONLY IMAGES WE SEEM TO GET OF THE “ARAB STREET.”

before, and looking back into the city, a skyline of giant cranes and gleaming new high-rises is punctuated by burnt out, shell-pocked hulks and city blocks emptied and leveled, reminding everyone of what happened, and what needs to be done. Beirut is back—chastened, sober, and subdued—but purged of the infantilism and rage that are the only images we seem to get of the “Arab street.” During the six days I spent in Beirut, I heard very little of sectarian-based animosities, conspiracy theories, or famous Arab whining about victimhood.

I was particularly struck by the genuine admiration for the Shi'a Hezbollah militia I found among Maronites, Druze, and Sunni I talked to in Lebanon, as well as in Amman and Damascus. Assigning blame to Bush, Sharon, or bin Laden was secondary to finding ways out of a situation seen as spinning completely out of control. In a curious way, the psychological brutality with which the Bush administration has treated the Arab world seems to have ended illusions that justice will be delivered by the world outside. The Arabs I met are beginning to understand it will have to come from within—and within increasingly includes the Shi'a, a sea change in my experience.

real shifts in power and decision-making regarding Iraq. Aborting the Likud tactics in Fallujah was, in a series of conversations with coalition diplomats and other knowledgeable people in Beirut, confirmed to be part of a mini-revolt in ministries and chanceries in the West where, it is believed, far too many mistakes have been made and dangerous ideas must no longer be allowed to prevail. The prisoner-abuse scandal and other embarrassments to follow will further strengthen the hands of coalition members whose participation is less ideologically driven.

In a seedier corner of the diplomatic enclave, tucked up against a congested and noisy overpass, the squat, lime green Iranian Embassy sits in an anonymity that belies its enormous power in contemporary Lebanon. I listened with interest as the refined and soft-spoken diplomat described co-operation with the British in their sector to neutralize “that dangerous boy” Muqtada al-Sadr. High on the list of counterintuitive things we are expected to swallow is the idea that the Iranians are so addled by fanaticism that they would loose this Robespierre on their Shi'a brethren rather than see a friendly neighbor evolve.

includes the Jordanians and Syrians, who have way too much on their plates already. The Turks are prudent enough that any cost-benefit would make intervention in the Kurdish areas prohibitively expensive in their relations with Europe—in which, due to the idiocy of Greek Cypriot political leaders, they now have momentum. Everything I was able to glean from other diplomatic and intelligence sources supported the Iranians' confident assertion that they have much to gain through a stable political transition in their once very dangerous neighbor. The Saudis are an enigma in all of this but would probably not cause trouble unless they saw Iran making too much hay—and the Iranians say they are mindful of this. The great irony of the neocons' Jacobin hallucination may be that most of the people they had hoped would be excluded—"fundamentalists," Ba'athists, even communists, along with the Iranians and Syrians—now have ample evidence to believe their interests will be well served in a stable quasi-democratic Iraq.

Iraq's neighbors have vital interests at stake, so none are sitting on the sidelines or obediently following instructions from a discredited Washington war leadership. "Meddling" occurs as each neighbor moves to protect its specific interests and the individuals and groups identified with them, but only the U.S. is silly enough to see this as anything other than reasonable behavior under the circumstances. Evidence will be unearthed, sensationalized, and used to further domestic agendas as our media and politicians express shock and outrage, but hopefully we will not ask more of our kids to die in a futile attempt to prevent it. Everyone's meddling is understood around the neighborhood, and they seem to be keeping in touch—bilateral relationships are strengthening, eclipsing charades like the Arab League, so real communication and a problem-

solving approach to important issues is beginning to trump posturing. That leaves al-Qaeda, lunatic but marginal Iraqi Ba'athists and fundamentalists, and the Likudniks in Washington and Tel Aviv as the only parties whose motives and interests may be otherwise.

Reports that a fairly comprehensive transition to UN-supervised Iraqi sovereignty is in the works strengthened markedly during my visit, buttressed by evidence that there is some unlikely collaboration going on in the region to arrive at a place where the U.S. can pull out. I was unable to find even one Arab who cared how we run our country, except as it directly affects them, and found none who believed that, if the U.S. military avoids crossing some well-understood red lines, they couldn't rotate out honorably. Both internally and among sovereign nations, an Arab center is beginning to develop and, if we don't try to micromanage it, it may learn to hold. Sectarians have seen Lebanon, advocates of Sharia have seen the Taliban, everyone has seen the futility of Arab nationalist puffery, and they are

much that goes on in the Middle East is becoming less about us—and less driven by us—than we are capable of believing.

Certainly the beheading of the unfortunate Nicholas Berg was aimed at at least one audience—the expatriate Western community working in the Muslim world—whose value as a strategic target is clearly not understood by our media or government. But it is appreciated by all of the Arabs I talked to, including fundamentalist Sharia advocates, who do not want Westerners driven out and the economic version of nuclear winter that would follow. So the Berg atrocity, along with killing too many Arabs lately, may involve grave miscalculation by al-Qaeda with the one audience that can do them real damage.

It is impossible to remain optimistic about a situation that could spin so easily out of control. At this writing, a truce in Fallujah that reflects many of the themes discussed here appears to be holding and similarly devolved arrangements in Najaf are being attempted. Yet U.S. armor is rooting around in places

## THE MIDDLE EAST IS BECOMING LESS ABOUT US—AND LESS DRIVEN BY US.

beginning to realize bomb throwing is only going to get them bombed, punished, and occupied.

The neocons, Likudniks, al-Qaeda, and their amazing adventures have accomplished one thing: they have terrified every sane person in that part of the world. Sanity is beginning to find its own militancy and voice. But it is not a Western one, and is very difficult to hear over the cacophony of competing atrocity photographs and the projection of U.S. electoral politics onto events in the region that are already complicated enough. The ironic truth may be that

where a misstep or misfire could literally engulf the Shi'a areas in a conflagration that could burn everything down. Al-Qaeda is still running around, and it's impossible to underestimate their appetite for chaos. And it is entirely possible that exhaustion of relief supplies and infrastructure collapse could cause chaos on its own. But what I really learned out there is that, if it does burn down, it didn't need to end that way. ■

---

*Jim Pittaway is a freelance writer who has lived and worked in the Middle East.*

# The Neocons' Man in Iraq

Why did Washington fall for Ahmed Chalabi?

By Steve Sailer

ONE OF THE MANY conundrums revolving around Ahmed Chalabi, that International Man of Mystery, is why so many neoconservatives took seriously his assertions that he was devoted to democracy. In the *Wall Street Journal*, for example, Seth Lipsky extolled the convicted embezzler as a “democratic visionary.” Why did it never occur to them that Chalabi might simply be blowing smoke? More broadly, why hadn’t it dawned upon the neocons that their obsession with this kind of ideological declaration is outdated?

Hadn’t liberals been embarrassed by megalomaniacal Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutionaries who orated passionately about democracy while they were hiding in the hills, but once in power quickly came to feel: “Hey, we didn’t spend all those years in the jungle living on fried iguanas just to be voted out in some *maricon* election.” Hadn’t conservatives been burned by the thuggish Jonas Savimbi, the Angolan rebel who said all the right things about elections and free enterprise but whose murderous behavior seemed to be based on the personal philosophy: “I am the biggest Big Man, and therefore anyone who gets in the way deserves to step on one of my landmines”?

Last February, an Oxford Research survey found that only 0.2 percent of Iraqis consider Chalabi the “leader they trust the most.” Yet the neocons long assumed that a majority in Iraq would vote for a man on the lam from a sen-

tence of 22 years hard labor in neighboring Jordan for fraud in the collapse of the Chalabi family’s Petra Bank. While the assembled intellectuals at the American Enterprise Institute might buy Chalabi’s rationalization that Saddam framed him, what mattered is that the common people in Jordan, some of whom lost their life savings, didn’t. From Jordan, Chalabi’s reputation as “Ahmed-the-Thief” filtered into Iraq.

What does Chalabi really want? The simplest guess is that he wants what too many ambitious Iraqis want these days: to be a trillionaire. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, “Iraq is estimated to hold 115 billion barrels of proven oil reserves.” At \$40 per barrel, Iraq’s oil is worth \$4.6 trillion. Sure, Iraq’s last trillionaire, Saddam Hussein, ended up in a hole in the ground, but he had one helluva ride along the way.

In *The New Yorker*, Jane Mayer quoted Scott Ritter, the much-reviled but apparently truth-telling weapons inspector, as saying, “[Chalabi] told me [in 1998] that, if I played ball, when he became President he’d control all of the oil concessions, and he’d make sure I was well taken care of.”

More generally, Chalabi successfully yanked the neocon chain because they refused to admit to themselves that the age of ideology, in which they usefully argued against communism, ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Thus, to provide ideological justification for their Iraq Attaq, the neocons resorted to neol-

ogisms like “Islamofascism,” a purported dogma alleged to motivate even Muslims as mutually hostile as Saddam and Osama.

In reality, the end of ideology was not the “end of history,” as Francis Fukuyama famously claimed. Instead, after two centuries of occasionally battling over what is the ideal form of government, the human race has reverted to its traditional pastime of brawling over who gets to run the government. In understanding affairs of state in the non-Western world today, neither *Mein Kampf* nor *Das Kapital* nor the Gettysburg Address is as insightful a guide as *The Godfather*.

We’re actually better off in our new world where we need to worry more about organized-crime clans than about great powers animated by radical ideologies. The Mafia, for all its sins, never targeted a thousand nuclear missiles upon America.

The Chalabi dynasty is old, rich, and unpopular. Nonetheless, Chalabi persuaded the Interim Governing Council to appoint him to the lucrative post of finance minister. He then used his influence to fill many of the other top positions with allies. Further, as William Beeman, director of Middle East Studies at Brown University, noted “Chalabi has created extra insurance by installing his relatives everywhere in the post-June 30th governmental structure, in true Middle Eastern fashion. They are the most loyal employees of all, and his



potential successors. First and foremost among them are his nephews. The term 'nepotism' comes from the Italian *nepote* —'nephew.' Mr. Chalabi has nephews galore." Nor is Chalabi overlooking the private sector. As *Newsweek* reported, "Today his extensive network of cousins and nephews runs almost every major bank."

In the Middle East, the popularity of cousin marriage turbocharges the nepotistic urge to shove relatives into government jobs, since nephews are often also sons-in-laws. Last year, Ann Marlowe visited Baghdad and reported:

I was fascinated with an article that claimed as many as half of Iraqi marriages were between first or second cousins, and that this made democracy difficult. On my first day there, I'd gone to see Ahmed Chalabi to see if he would discuss it for an interview. 'By fostering intense family loyalties and strong nepotistic urges, inbreeding makes the development of civil society more difficult,' Steve Sailer wrote in *The American Conservative*. 'The clannishness, corruption, and coups frequently observed in countries such as Iraq appear to be tied into the high rates of inbreeding.'

Marlowe continued: "When I asked Ahmed his view of this theory, he snorted: 'The Jews have had cousin marriages galore, and it hasn't hurt them.'" I would argue that I have had the last laugh in this debate, except that the Chalabi family appears to be crying all the way to the bank.

Iraq's new prime minister-designate, Iyad Allawi, is the cousin of the defense minister Ali Allawi, who is Chalabi's nephew. Whether Iyad and Ahmed will be clannish colleagues or relative rivals is impossible for me to predict, but clearly the regime we are creating will

be rife with dynastic intrigues.

American intellectuals have a terrible time understanding the political significance of crime families like the Chalabis because they pay so little attention to their own extended families. In parts of the world less blessed by honest administration of justice, however, maintaining close bonds to distant relatives offers the surest security and advancement.

Paradoxically, the neoconservatives should be able to grasp the importance of clan connections better than other Western elites since they are increasingly linked to each other by marriage and blood. Longtime *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz, for instance, is the father of columnist John Pod-

horetz, the father-in-law of Elliot Abrams (President Bush's senior adviser on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), and the grandfather of four young Israelis. Further, the key neocon institutions of the *Weekly Standard* and the American Enterprise Institute are connected by the Kristols, father and son. Lynne Cheney, a senior fellow at AEI, is the wife of Vice President Dick Cheney, who in turn chose AEI fellows for war-making roles in the administration.

As the neocons meld into one big happy family, their new solidarity makes them brutally effective at bureaucratic infighting but also disinclines them to debunk harshly each other's delusions. Thus, they dragged all of us into Chalabi's charade. ■

## Untalented Tenth

Texas' affirmative-action substitute flunks out.

By Robert Stacy McCain

THREE WEEKS BEFORE the 2000 presidential election, University of Texas President Larry R. Faulkner offered newspaper editors an op-ed column titled, "The 'Top 10 Percent Law' Is Working for Texas."

Faulkner sang the praises of the 1997 law, which guaranteed that Texas students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their high-school classes would be admitted to the state university of their choice, a supposed alternative to explicit racial preferences in admissions.

The law "enabled us to diversify enrollment at UT Austin with talented students who succeed," Faulkner wrote. Under its provisions, "minority students earned higher grade point averages last

year ... and have higher retention rates. ... So, the law is helping us to create a more representative student body and enroll students who perform well academically."

Faulkner's column implied that, unlike explicitly race-based affirmative-action programs, the Texas plan achieved these wonders without discrimination. After all, Faulkner pointed out, "*more than half* the spaces in the freshman class remain available to non-top-10-percent graduates. Furthermore, because the freshman class has increased in size to more than 7,600, there are about as many spaces for non-top 10 percent graduates as in past years."

After years of legal and political battles over affirmative action, a reader

might conclude that Texas had found the perfect solution. That Faulkner made these declarations just before a presidential election in which Texas Gov. George W. Bush was a candidate—well, only a cynic would find this suspicious.

But like much else that Americans were told about the Texas education miracle during the 2000 campaign, praise for the state's top 10-percent plan has proven too good to be true. Both Faulkner and Bush's successor, Republican Gov. Rick Perry, said as much last month.

"We're admitting far too high a fraction of the freshman class on the basis of one criterion," Faulkner told the *Austin-American Statesman*. "And that's not healthy for Texas or this university."

The governor was equally critical. "I clearly think it is a problem," Perry told the paper, explaining that "highly qualified" students were "leaving the state ... because they can't get into the University of Texas. ... I really don't see how it has worked the way people projected it would work. And I think, across the board, Texans see it as a problem." Why, just four years after such effusive praise, have Faulkner and Perry turned against the 10-percent plan?

It is important to remember that the plan was passed a year after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down Texas's previous university affirmative-action programs in the 1996 *Hopwood* case. With the usual systems of racial preferences outlawed, the top 10-percent scheme was an improvisation by the Texas legislature. But last year, the Supreme Court upheld the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative-action program, with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor explicitly recognizing "a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body." Texas officials apparently see that as a green light to

return to explicit racial preferences. "The recent Supreme Court ruling has freed universities to use race as a factor in admissions," said Robert Black, a spokesman for the governor. As a result, he said, the top 10-percent plan may be "obsolete."

University of Texas officials certainly hope so. A university task force on "enrollment strategy" recommended last month that "race and ethnicity be among the criteria considered in the holistic review of applicants for admission to the university." Chairwoman Isabella Cunningham declared, "it is essential that the university be a diverse and united community to foster the social growth of all its members."

Another reason the top 10-percent plan is on the chopping block is that it has been, perhaps, too successful in promoting "diversity." The freshman class

Looking at the numbers, it's easy to see that the phenomenal success of Asian students under the top 10-percent plan has created a political volcano. Unlike blacks and Hispanics, who constitute a near-majority of Democratic voters in Texas, Asians are not a powerful political constituency. While whites sink to record lows of enrollment at UT—no doubt spurring resentment among those of Perry's Republican constituents whose kids are denied admission—there are also fewer entrance slots for the blacks and Hispanics who were supposed to win under the plan.

Of course, nobody in Texas is saying any of that—at least not plainly—though Gov. Perry's spokesman says that after visiting classrooms in West Texas the governor was dismayed to learn that many promising Hispanic students were planning to attend college

## THE FRESHMAN CLASS THAT ENTERED UT LAST FALL WAS THE MOST DIVERSE EVER. WHITES CONSTITUTED LESS THAN 60 PERCENT OF FRESHMEN.

that entered UT last fall was the most diverse ever. For the first time, whites constituted less than 60 percent of UT freshmen. (About 52 percent of Texans are non-Hispanic whites.) Meanwhile, Asians—less than 3 percent of the Texas population—constituted some 18 percent. But the preference pie can only be sliced so many ways. More than 40 percent of Texans are either black (11 percent) or Hispanic (32 percent), but they comprise a combined 21 percent of UT freshmen.

"We have a lot of minority students who are unable to get into our top-tier universities because of the top 10-percent rule," said the governor's spokesman. "That was an unintended consequence."

out of state after failing to qualify under the top 10-percent rule. "Certainly everybody thought [the top 10-percent plan] was a good idea, but we didn't foresee what was going to happen," the spokesman said. Asked why those West Texas Hispanic students don't enroll in second-tier state schools like Prairie View A&M and Sam Houston State, Black changes the subject. And he evades questions about why "diversity" is so vital in higher education.

Those who don't know much about affirmative action tend to assume that it involves relatively minor preferences in favor of black and Hispanic applicants. In fact, when calculated by comparing test scores and grade-point averages, such preferences are overwhelming. At

leading public universities with competitive admissions processes the quest for “diversity” generally results in the admission of black and Hispanic freshmen with SAT scores about 200 points lower than their white and Asian peers.

Because the admissions advantage accorded to black and Hispanic students is preposterously large, universities do all in their power to keep the public in the dark. (In 1991, a white student was prosecuted by Georgetown Law School for revealing data about the huge gap between the qualifications of the university’s white and black students.) Although state universities are funded by taxpayers—and private universities, by accepting federal tuition aid, are beneficiaries of taxpayer largesse—quantitative information on affirmative-action programs is carefully concealed. It is only through lawsuits challenging racial preferences that such data are usually disclosed.

It was the *Hopwood* case that brought to light the extent of racial preferences in Texas. Cheryl Hopwood, a white student, had been denied admission to UT Law. Her lawsuit revealed that the law school’s admissions process was essentially two separate—and extremely unequal—processes. Applications were divided so that one admissions committee evaluated whites and “non-preferred minorities” (Asians), while another screened “preferred minority” (black and Hispanic) applicants. Each applicant was given a Texas Index (TI) score to reflect a weighted combination of his undergraduate GPA and his LSAT score. Based on TI scores, applications were divided into three categories: “presumptive admit” amounted to a more or less automatic admission; “presumptive deny” was an almost certain rejection; and a “discretionary zone” of applications with intermediate scores, which were then evaluated on factors beyond GPA or LSAT scores. The “presumptive

admit” minimum for whites and Asians was 199; for blacks and Hispanics, it was 189. Furthermore, the “discretionary zone” for blacks and Hispanics was nearly twice as large so that their “presumptive deny” score was 179, while it was 192 for whites and Asians.

As a result, a white or Asian student with a TI score of 191 was automatically denied admission, while a black or Hispanic with a 189 TI was automatically granted admission. Furthermore, the difference in the discretionary zone meant that “preferred minorities” could in some circumstances be admitted with a TI as low as 179, while no white or Asian applicant was considered for admission with a score that low.

This blatantly discriminatory practice was struck down, and in its place Texas implemented the 10-percent plan. Now that plan is failing—exposing as a joke yet another aspect of the “education miracle” that in 2000 Republicans said made Bush “a reformer with results.”

Last year, the *Washington Post* reported that Houston’s public education system, praised as the best urban school district in the country and key to landing superintendent Rod Paige his current job as Secretary of Education, was in fact a Potempkin village. Under Paige, Houston schools reported significant decreases in their dropout rates and increases in standardized test scores, while the “achievement gap” between white and minority students shrank dramatically.

One Houston high school’s reported dropout rate fell from 14.4 percent to 0.3 percent but a city school board member called that claim “baloney.” Another school reported zero dropouts until a local TV station located a teenager who was supposedly enrolled full-time but was actually working at Wendy’s. It was discovered that someone had fudged school paperwork to make 30 dropouts disappear from district records.

As for the supposed improvement in achievement scores, it appears that Houston educators arranged for poor-performing students to avoid taking the tests. Since the high-school tests were administered to 10th-graders, many students were held back in 9th grade an extra year or two, then skipped up to 11th grade. In one Houston high school in 2001, there were 1,160 9th-graders and 281 10th-graders. One former student told the *Post* that she spent three years in 9th grade before being skipped to 11th grade. A former Houston school official explained, “The secret of doing well in the 10th-grade tests is not to let the problem kids get to the 10th grade.”

This is more than a local scandal because the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act—the \$23-billion-a-year education bill Bush pushed through Congress in 2002—is in large part modeled on the policies implemented in Texas while he was governor. “We improved our schools dramatically, for children of every accent, of every background,” he proclaimed at the 2000 Republican convention.

But the Texas “miracle” was an illusion and the federal legislation it inspired is unlikely to have any magical effect nationally. Already there are political rumbles against NCLB. The administration has granted waivers on some of the law’s provisions. Governors and legislators are complaining that NCLB amounts to a massive unfunded mandate. And, as columnist Robert Novak recently reported, Republican congressional candidates are facing heat from grassroots conservatives who hate NCLB.

In time, Bush’s national education policy is doomed to end up like his Texas “miracle”—discredited and discarded. ■

---

*Robert Stacy McCain is an assistant national editor for the Washington Times.*

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Napoleon Dynamite* and *Maria Full of Grace*]

## Of Mormons and Mules

By Steve Sailer

NOT EVERY MOVIE this summer will be a blockbuster sequel boasting computer wizardry and butt-kicking babes in bustiers. Perhaps the most promising small film on the horizon is August's "Bright Young Things," Stephen Fry's adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*. In the meantime, two quite different low-budget movies about intriguing teenagers, "Napoleon Dynamite" and "Maria Full of Grace," will debut.

"Napoleon Dynamite," a \$400,000 comedy that was snatched up at the Sundance Festival for \$3 million by Fox Searchlight, is the first feature written by two Brigham Young University graduates, 24-year-old director Jared Hess and his pregnant wife Jerusha. The director says, "The characters are inspired largely by people I grew up with in Idaho, especially by my five younger brothers."

At the screening I attended, Hollywood's Bright Young Mormons were out in force as the theatre resounded with the lovely laughter of wholesome-looking starlets from the Great Basin. The twenty-something crowd found the small-town misadventures and eventual triumph of an ornery high-school geek (voted "Most Likely to Find Sasquatch")

a cartoonish but redolent delight. This mild, PG-rated film is now rolling out to 1,200 theatres.

Personally, I didn't find the movie terribly funny, and it made me feel downright wizened to realize that I'm too over-the-hill to get the jokes that are slaying all the Mormon hipsters.

Also, I was embarrassed by how much our el dorko hero—as played by a tall BYU student named Jon Heder with a blondish afro, thick glasses, perpetually peeved expression, and a brown polyester three-piece suit—looked like me, circa 1977. The production designer, another BYU grad, described the mish-mash "retro-ugly" aesthetic of Preston, Idaho's inhabitants like this: "We had this sense of people who lived in a world where all the styles that got left behind were just piled up on top of one another."

One of the less remarked demographic trends is that the makers of "Napoleon Dynamite" represent the future. As coastal sophisticates fail to reproduce themselves, an ever-increasing percentage of young white people come from conservative, religious backgrounds. Mormon Utah has by far the highest birthrate, of course, but in the 2000 election, the 19 states with the highest white fertility all voted for Bush, while nine of the ten states at the bottom of the white birthrate list voted for Gore.

"Napoleon Dynamite" consists mostly of disjointed skits, and doesn't develop a plot until halfway through when Napoleon decides to help his only friend, a Mexican immigrant, defeat the snooty blonde beauty for class president. In contrast, "Maria Full of Grace," the story of a 17-year-old Colombian girl who transports 62 golf-ball-sized drug pellets to New York in her digestive track, is nothing but a freight train of a plot.

Coming in July, the R-rated "Maria" is, oddly enough, a Spanish-language film written and directed by a young American named Joshua Marston, whose father had grown up in Colombia. Marston is devoted to cinematic realism, so he researched the lives of drug mules intimately. His key question became why some Colombians become criminals while others don't.

The director ran into an analogous conundrum on the national scale when the endemic violence in Colombia grew so threatening that he had to shift his production at the last minute to neighboring Ecuador. Why has Colombia long been notorious for people chopping each other up with chainsaws, "Scarface"-style, while Ecuador clings to respectability?

Pretty young Maria is employed de-thorning rose stems in Colombia's honest export industry. It's boring work—although there are plenty of other jobs that smell worse. But it's not good enough for Maria. Nor is her boring boyfriend's dutiful offer of marriage when she announces she's pregnant. Maria then wonders if she can trick an expensively-dressed young man with a fast motorcycle into thinking the baby is his, only to discover that this recruiter for the cartel merely wants to get into her gastrointestinal tract.

Marston's unsentimental approach works well, until the "happy ending," when Maria decides to stay here as an illegal alien. Her fatherless baby will be born a U.S. citizen, making her alarmingly hard to deport. The movie assumes that she's escaping the turmoil in her native land, but we Americans can be forgiven for worrying whether this single teen mother with a taste for trouble isn't just bringing some of it with her. ■



## BOOKS

[*An Honest Writer: The Life and Times of James T. Farrell*, Robert K. Landers, Encounter Books, 562 pages]

### Writing Irishman

By Ralph de Toledano

JOHN O'HARA ONCE remarked, "The Irish, especially the egg-heads, prefer their Irish to conform to the James T. Farrell prescription." This categorization is significant. H.L. Mencken, who, with reservations, admired Farrell as a writer and a person, would write to him, "A Canadian asked me to nominate the best living American novelist. I sent in the name of a Chicago Irishman named Farrell." "Chicago" and "Irishman" should have been underscored, as they were in Mencken's mind, as they were for Jim Farrell's friends and critics.

The years have softened the view of James T. Farrell, as they have of what Mencken, in a letter to Theodore Dreiser, called the Irishman's "political hallucinations." From birth in a tough Irish neighborhood to his life as an embattled writer and far-left political combatant, to his last years when he still held to his adolescent-style atheism but made his peace with the priests who gave him refuge, Jim Farrell never lost his fighting Irishness or the chip on his shoulder.

Of some of this I can speak with a small amount of personal knowledge. As an undergraduate at Columbia, having read and admired the power of Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, I would worship but never approach him as he stood at the bar of the Gold Rail, a Broadway bar and grill a few blocks south of the campus. Years later, as an editor of the anti-communist/anti-fascist newspaper *The New Leader*, I would handle his copy and applaud his vivisection

tion of *Mission to Moscow*, Hollywood's version of Ambassador Joseph E. Davies's fictional depiction of the Moscow Trials and the Stalin terror.

I had almost no contact at all with Jim Farrell until the 1950s when, as a *Newsweek* editor and author of *Seeds of Treason*, an account of the Hiss-Chambers case, I traveled the talk-radio circuit. After one such show, on which I was paired with Jim Farrell, he suggested that we have a drink. "Sorry," I said, "Whittaker Chambers [making one of his rare visits to New York] is at my house, and I've got to get back." "That's all right," Jim said, "I'll go back with you. I met Chambers back in the '30s when he was editor of the *New Masses*. I'd like to see him again." I demurred. My house was a kind of refuge for Chambers, and it was seldom that he agreed to the invasion of others. But Jim insisted. It was an interesting evening. Jim sat literally at Whittaker's feet and, *mirabile dictu* for someone to whom conversation was an order of battle, he said almost nothing—just listened.

Now Encounter Books has published *An Honest Writer: The Life and Times of James T. Farrell*, by Robert K. Landers—and the Library of America is reissuing *Studs Lonigan*, which many years ago was dropped from the Modern Library list. For those of us who lived through the political and literary events of the 1940s, '50s, '60s, and beyond, this is almost a return to things past, though in no way in a Proustian sense.

IN THE LITERARY AND POLITICAL BATTLES OF THE DAY, HE SWUNG A MEAN SHILLALY—AS HE DID IN PERSONAL CONTROVERSY.

In *An Honest Writer*, Landers praisefully chronicles almost every word that Farrell wrote, which, given Farrell's overwhelming and unceasing production, is quite an accomplishment. *Studs Lonigan*—which was his entry into the world of Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the other giants of the '30s, '40s, and onward—the

Danny O'Neill saga, and the novels and short stories that leaped from his pen and typewriter are product enough—and with them go his parallel output of literary criticism and political polemic in the pre- and post-World War II periods.

From infancy, trauma lived alongside Jimmy Farrell. Neither in this biography nor in any of his writing is there any explanation why his slum-Irish mother and father turned him over to his more prosperous maternal grandparents while they continued to have children. The *Studs Lonigan* books and the novels that followed powerfully depicted, sometimes in raw and brutal terms, the slums of a brawling Irish Chicago, dominated by social squalor and the Catholic Church.

Parochial school and the life around him made an atheist of Farrell. That atheism was confirmed during his years at the University of Chicago, years interrupted by jobs and the criminal activities of friends, in which he sometimes participated. It was not until he decided to become a writer that his life began to take direction. But until the last years, his writing was obsessional. The words poured out by the thousands, undisciplined and untutored. It was not unusual for him to work around the clock, missing sleep and meals. Plot and style meant little to him. He was driven always by the need to put down on paper all that he had experienced. His editors tried to stanch the flow, to give him a sense of what form and style meant—but he

ignored their attempted guidance.

He had power, the power of his reportage, the drive of his expression, but nowhere the skills of a writer. Mencken's published letters include many to the early Farrell—it is odd that they were not included in this biography—but they had little effect on him. In one, written in 1932, Mencken scolds,

commenting on a manuscript Farrell had sent him, "You fall considerably short of your best work," namely *Studs Lonigan*. "Another defect lies in the dialogue. Certainly you cannot tell me that Chicago boys speak the Chimmie Fadden dialect that you put in their mouths." Nor would he modify his fervid "naturalism"—what Somerset Maugham deplored in writers who insisted on "calling a spade a damned shovel." Farrell insisted on reporting it as it was, which by today's standards would hardly cause a twitter.

It is both interesting and significant that the publisher of *Young Lonigan*, the first part of the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, feared censorship and police action and issued the book as a "sociological" study, with proper academic sanction. The watch-and-ward organizations saw it differently, and were always on the tail of Farrell and his publishers. And there was always his Irishness, which at once attracted and repelled the publishing establishment. Clifton Fadiman, then the panjandrum of book reviewing from

his throne at the *New Yorker*, skittered away, and Edmund Wilson, from the puffed-up intellectual eminence of the *New Republic* and the *New Yorker*, would not even acknowledge Farrell's existence—at least in print. And Farrell's heavy drinking, his readiness in political, literary, or personal debate to knock the chip off anyone's shoulder, and his fluctuating political loyalties did not endear him to those who controlled the literary world.

Those loyalties first won him and then lost him the support of the literary establishment. *Studs Lonigan* and his early stories, with their naturalism, brought him the wide approbation of the Communist Left, which could make and even break a writer. Mike Gold and the *New Masses* beat the drums for him, as did Malcolm Cowley and the *New Republic* and the *Nation's* Marxists. Farrell bought it, worshipping at the shrine of the Communist Party and the USSR. This made life and career beautiful until Farrell realized there was a hair in it. Still faithful to Marxist-Leninism, he turned to Trotskyism—in those days the kiss of death at the *New York Times* and its dominant book-review section, and everywhere up and down Madison Avenue. Farrell could have said, "Today is Friday," and the literary establishment would have roared in anger.

At this point, Jim Farrell drifted away into the kinder and more rational areas of social democracy, and it was at this time that I got to know him and to edit his copy, but he had involved himself in the battles that raged in *Partisan Review*, a magazine that could at once publish T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, George Orwell, and Dwight Macdonald. In its pages—as I have rediscovered going over my own incomplete files—Jim Farrell wasted his substance debating abstruse political nonsense. And as one who had left the periphery of the Party, joining in the defense of Leon Trotsky won for him the undying enmity of the writers, intellectuals, and moguls of book publishing and reviewing.

In the literary and political battles of the day, he swung a mean shillaly—as he

did in personal controversy. And he wore his rue with a difference. Those who knew him attested to his complete lack of sensitivity toward others. Whatever came to his mind he said, never considering how it might hurt or harm—and when this was brought to his attention, he never quite understood. So it was with family, friends who had stood by his side in battle, and those who came to his defense when the all-powerful Left establishment sought to derogue and destroy him.

Jim Farrell lived his life at war with the world, with the women who loved him, and most notably with himself. In private conversation, John O'Hara would say, "There are three kinds of Irish—shanty, lace-curtain, and whiskey-in-the-house-when-nobody's-sick—Farrell was all three, and hated them all." At times in his life the whiskey was there, in and out of the house. So were his fists and his tongue. But what this biography faithfully underlines is that in everything he spoke or wrote, whether right or wrong, there was uncompromising honesty, integrity, and passion, whatever the cost, to the disapproval of his dishonest and effete critics.

For all of this, and given the liabilities of his writing and the failure of much of his later work, he contributed one very important reverse hagiography to the shelf of American writing, the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy—a work written with the guts of his childhood and adolescence. It is fitting that the Library of America should give back to us what is indelibly a part of the American literary heritage. Jim Farrell carried many hates through his life, but it is something to remember that in his final days he returned to the Church for the comfort that he could not find elsewhere. Putting down *An Honest Writer*, we can ask where the rest of the writers have gone. ■

*Ralph de Toledano is a former editor for Newsweek and the author or editor of over 20 books, including Notes From the Underground: The Whittaker Chambers-Ralph de Toledano Letters, 1949-1960.*

## MOVING?

### Changing your address?

Simply go to **The American Conservative** website, [www.amconmag.com](http://www.amconmag.com). Click "subscribe" and then click "address change."

To access your account make sure you have your TAC mailing label. You may also subscribe or renew online.

If you prefer to mail your address change send your TAC label with your new address to:

**The American Conservative**  
Subscription Department  
P.O. Box 9030  
Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

[After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order, Emmanuel Todd, Columbia University Press, 192 pages]

## The Decline and Fall

By Harold O.J. Brown

A NUMBER OF French writers have published brilliant insights into the condition of the Western world today. Aaron-Arnaud Upinski, in *La Tete coupee*, "The Severed Head," (not yet available in translation) and Chantal Delsol, in *Icarus Fallen* (translated and available from ISI Books), reveal some seemingly incurable weaknesses in democratic practice in both France and the United States. Neither country operates the way it is constitutionally supposed to; we ordinary people are governed by unelected experts, bureaucrats, and judges. Unfortunately, these books require serious study to appreciate. As a result, they may never have the therapeutic effect on political life that they could, especially in America, where we prefer to vote without thinking, if we vote at all.

Emmanuel Todd is different, and more alarming, because he is much easier to understand. In *After the Empire*, Todd has directly addressed the complex paradox of American international and domestic politics today: our quixotic pursuit of empire abroad is accompanied by economic decay and impending financial disaster within. One might be tempted to shrug off Todd's criticisms if he had not already proved himself a good prophet. In 1976 he correctly predicted (in *La Chute finale*, "The Final Fall") the collapse of the Soviet Union, when for the rest of us it was still a looming menace, the Evil Empire, as President Reagan put it. We can ignore what Todd writes about us in *After the Empire* only at our own risk.

The author sees a reality of which most of us are only dimly aware, if at all. In the past dozen years, our nation has

fallen from its brief reign as the "sole superpower" to be the unique superproblem, first for ourselves and then for others. In his introduction, Michael Lind agrees with Todd that this book is not anti-American but a sympathetic critique, intended to help us turn from the direction that will lead to ongoing frustration, if not to total disaster. Yet it is bitter medicine, to be sure.

The United States is not the "indispensable nation," as Madeleine Albright liked to say, but our military, moral, and above all economic health is of crucial importance to the rest of the world. If we stumble and fall because our eyes are fixed on an unattainable imperium, everyone else will suffer too. Refusal to face reality while dreaming of empire endangers the rest of the world as well as us. We are unable, Todd argues, to achieve our high ambition to change the world for the better. We must moderate our aspirations, and look at the advice given to us by our first president. George Washington wanted us to avoid foreign entanglements; this is no longer possible, for we are entangled everywhere.

Many of the points that Todd makes involve things that we already know but do not want to accept; in other cases, he brings to our attention realities that we ought to see but apparently do not. Todd's thesis is that United States possesses invincible military might in the air and on the sea. No nation would dare

Todd describes? While other nations have been declining militarily, they have been advancing industrially and economically; we have risen to unrivaled peaks of military ability, but, in the process, we are teetering on the edge of economic disaster. Military superiority alone is not enough. In his concluding chapter, Todd observes—no doubt painfully for a Frenchman of Austrian and Jewish heritage—that in the 20th century no country, neither France, nor Germany, nor Japan, succeeded in increasing its power through military buildups or war. For us to imagine that we can prevail everywhere because of our undoubted technological military might is a dangerous illusion. The rest of the world is simply too large for us to dominate militarily, not to mention economically. Our military strength will become less and less important in the light of our growing economic weakness.

Because of our unchallengeable military strength, we seem to be suffering under the delusion that we can reshape the rest of the world. America's policy is to demonstrate that strength by military successes. Whether or not the United States misled Saddam Hussein into thinking that he could annex Kuwait and suffer no consequences, the fact that he did invade, in violation of international law and the United Nations Charter, gave the United States a plausible reason to begin showing off our military might

### IF WE STUMBLE AND FALL BECAUSE OUR EYES ARE FIXED ON AN UNATTAINABLE IMPERIUM, EVERYONE ELSE WILL SUFFER TOO.

to challenge us there. Unfortunately, our strength on land is less, not suited to fighting guerrillas, as we are discovering in Iraq.

In 1991, when the Soviet Union abolished itself, we stood head and shoulders above all of the nations of the world, the sole superpower, or as the French like to say, hyperpower. How did we get ourselves into the alarming condition that

and reaffirming our own national self-confidence by engaging "in a maximum number of conflicts against two-bit military opponents ... first blackballed as 'rogue states' ... and then whipped soundly so as to demonstrate the force of America. The opponent has to be weak." Todd has little to say about Bosnia and Kosovo, but the practice of making war on what he calls "dwarf

nations" began in earnest with Clinton and is continuing. It is impossible to deny that since Vietnam we have fought only "dwarf nations." Is he right about our reason for doing so?

In chapter one, Todd argues against what he calls "the myth of universal terrorism," and contends that the rise of literacy and the decline in birth rates around the world should dispel our fear of continuing and spreading terror. This seems a bit unrealistic. The original French edition was published before the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 in New York and Washington and March 11 in Madrid. They make his assertion less persuasive today than it may have been earlier. Somewhat unconvincingly, he describes America as increasingly intolerant of diversity in the world, especially of the Muslim-Arab cultures. He gets in a few jibes at "Anglo-Saxon feminism," led, he rather implausibly thinks, by Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Blair. Tolerance and approval of diversity are now mandatory within the United States, but in Todd's eyes we will not stand for it elsewhere, especially when it oppresses women.

As a demographer, he places a great deal of emphasis on vital statistics and sees hope in both the increasing literacy and the declining birth rates of the Muslim nations. At this point his argument is not particularly convincing to this reviewer. Both the Germans and the Japanese had a high degree of literacy when they launched World War II. Somewhat paradoxically, Todd notes the drastic decline of the birth rate in Europe and Russia, and at the same time envisages a great rise for Europe led by a Franco-German alliance in economic and political competition with the United States. With respect to Russia, whose importance on the world stage will wax, he believes, he expresses gratitude for the fact that the Russians still have a nuclear strike force sufficiently strong to dissuade the United States from starting anything foolish with our own nuclear weapons. It is unfortunate that in this new century we have to look to Russia, the successor of the once dreaded USSR, as the guardian of peace

against potential American excesses.

Less difficult to argue against and therefore even more troubling than what Todd says about our supposed illusions of empire is his irrefutable presentation of America's perilous economic situation. The argument that intervention in the Middle East is necessary for America's energy—i.e., for oil—is, he says, flawed in two ways: first, the Middle East supplies only about 28 percent of our oil imports, and second, the amount that we spend on imported oil is only about one-fifth of our total trade deficit. If Middle East oil imports were cut off entirely, we would survive; if all foreign oil were to be cut off, we would not starve and would still have clothes to keep ourselves warm. In the context of the Middle East, our support for Israel is problematic, a handicap to our relations with the Muslims of the Near East. "The American Jewish community has fallen into the disturbing, not to say neurotic, cult of the Holocaust." It is not clear what alternative Todd would propose, either for Israel or for us.

Economically, we are in an extremely vulnerable position, far more vulnerable than most Americans even suspect. If all imports were to be cut off, we would be in desperate straits, for according to Todd over 90 percent of what we consume comes from outside the country. From being the world's leading producer, we have become the world's leading consumer. The huge size of our GNP is misleading, for so much of it is made up by services in contrast to real agricultural and industrial production. The dollar is weak, and it is at least possible that it will lose its status as the world reserve currency to the euro, with horrible consequences for the U.S. economy. Readers may find this news unwelcome, but that is the point. Todd's book is like a hearty dose of castor oil: strong medicine, but a remedy that, if swallowed, will help us to purge ourselves of much that ails us. ■

*Harold O.J. Brown is professor of theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.*

[*Thomas Jefferson, R.B. Bernstein, Oxford University Press, xviii + 253 pages*]

## Everyman's Jefferson

By Kevin R.C. Gutzman

RICHARD B. BERNSTEIN'S new biography of Thomas Jefferson is a flawed book, but one with notable virtues. Alone among all the numerous texts on America's favorite icon, it is at once a general biography of Jefferson, a synthesis of the latest scholarship written for any literate American, and essentially neutral. The expert and the Jefferson aficionado will find in these few pages a good start on what they would like the mythical "average educated layman" to know about Jefferson. Anyone who has not read a book on the greatest penman of the American Revolution would be well advised to start here before undertaking more specialized studies.

Recent notable treatments of Jefferson have included Annette Gordon-Reed's volume finally proving, for anyone willing to learn, that Jefferson had a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings; Andrew Burstein's highly sympathetic version of a nearly feminine Jefferson wishing to establish a tight circle of sympathetic (in the Greek sense) fellow Republicans; Peter S. Onuf's suicidal old man brooding over the impending doom of the Revolutionary legacy; David Mayer's largely libertarian account of Jefferson's constitutional thought; and Joseph Ellis's sphinx-like, because internally contradictory, egalitarian slave owner. While these books, particularly Gordon-Reed's, will stand as landmarks in the literature, each is marked by the times and concerns out of which it grew.

Bernstein's book, on the other hand, is far less personal. In his introduction the author says, "Previous writers have veered between ... poles ... praising Jefferson for his aspirations or damning



him for his failures. By contrast, this book seeks a balanced understanding of Jefferson ...” This statement accurately describes others’ work and forecasts the balance of this book, in which Bernstein offers “neither defensive praise nor unsparing censure.”

Jefferson was born into a world in which members of leading families (and Jefferson came from the pre-eminent Virginia family, his mother’s Randolphs) could expect to be elected to seats in the House of Burgesses, the colony’s only elective political offices. A gentleman, as Bernstein notes (and here his debt is to Rhys Isaac’s Pulitzer Prize-winning classic *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*), was not to work for his bread, but to hire or purchase others to do so for him. Very gracefully, Bernstein points out that Jefferson’s variegated genius could never have flourished as it did without the leisure afforded him by his great wealth in land and slaves.

Elsewhere, Bernstein has been a forceful advocate of his colleague Gordon-Reed’s argument that Jefferson did indeed have children with his slave/half-sister-in-law, Sally Hemings. Here, his attention to this topic is measured, but perhaps not justly balanced; Gordon-Reed’s argument has great merits, which Bernstein spells out, and the splenetic arguments launched against her by various Jefferson descendants and others deservedly receive little attention. Yet, one would never guess that prominent experts in this field are among those who still have their questions. (I should note that I find this question both less vexing and less interesting than the general public and some other experts seem to, and that—for what it is worth—I am convinced, as a result of reading Gordon-Reed’s book and attempting to understand the DNA evidence, that Hemings was indeed the mother of at least one child by Thomas Jefferson.)

After describing Jefferson’s splendid education, particularly in the law but also in the attitudes of the Enlightenment, Bernstein devotes a chapter to Jefferson in the period from the end of

the Seven Years War to the promulgation of the American Declaration of Independence. Here one encounters some significant errors of fact. First, it was George Mason’s draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776, not the final version, that offered Virginians religious “toleration.” Article XVI of the final version sported James Madison’s phrase, “free exercise,” and thus bore a substantially more liberal (that is, Jeffersonian) cast. Too, Virginia’s independence was established on May 15, 1776, independently of Congress’s call that day for the states to create their own constitutions. It was not until several days later that residents of Williamsburg, the colonial capital, learned of the coincidence that the Revolutionary Virginia Convention had decided to create a republican constitution on the same day as the states’ legates in the Continental Congress had suggested that all the states do so. One cannot comprehend Virginians’—Jefferson’s—views on the subject of federalism without being aware of this significant fact: Virginia had an independent, republican government before July 4, 1776.

This chapter also demonstrates some of the difficulty associated with brevity. Jefferson’s political life spanned more than five decades, and during that time he wrote a number of documents and

took a number of actions that have become subjects for deeply interesting books. It is unsurprising, then, that an expert on “A Summary View of the Rights of British America” (your reviewer) should wince to see the inspiration of Jefferson’s argument in that pamphlet, Richard Bland, go completely unmentioned in that context. But that is the way of the short Jefferson biography: Jefferson and music? Absent. Jefferson reading Plutarch? Not a word. Jefferson encouraging Spencer Roane of Virginia’s highest court to combat the “errors” of John Marshall? Nothing. Even the intended audiences of the Declaration of Independence? Regrettably, but entirely predictably, there is nothing here on that topic. There also is not a word here to indicate that Jefferson would have preferred helping to write Virginia’s 1776 constitution to staying in Philadelphia, contenting himself with drafting the Declaration. An introduction is what Bernstein offers, and readers interested in those topics will have to search out more specialized books on Jefferson, or perhaps longer biographies.

In the notes to his chapter on Jefferson’s tenure as American minister to France, 1784-89, Bernstein says that he has written the chapter “in skeptical engagement with Conor Cruise O’Brien,

## Subscribe to The American Conservative Today.

Simply go to  
**[www.amconmag.com](http://www.amconmag.com)**  
and click “Subscribe”

or call  
**1-800-579-6148**



*The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, 1785-1800.*" Bernstein's account of Jefferson is oddly Jeffersonian on this score: Jefferson's really blood-curdling equanimity as his friends are guillotined is simply recounted. (He said that he would rather have seen every nation reduced to two people than to have foregone the benefits of the French Revolution.) The reader cannot take the measure of the man without knowing that the victims of French political murder included the Marquis de Chastellux, whose correspondence with Jefferson and visits to Monticello are mentioned elsewhere in this tome. It seems to this reviewer that this lets Jefferson off too easily, and the reader who praises Bernstein for his even-handedness should note the distinction between Bernstein's approach here and his attitude toward Jefferson's various expressions of racism.

**WHY CARE ABOUT JEFFERSON?** IN HIS EPILOGUE, BERNSTEIN QUOTES JEFFERSON BIOGRAPHER JAMES PARTON'S 1874 ANSWER: "IF JEFFERSON WAS WRONG, AMERICA IS WRONG. IF AMERICA IS RIGHT, JEFFERSON WAS RIGHT."

Bernstein does not ignore or omit those. He likely judges them more topical than Jefferson's attitudes concerning and responses to political terror and state-sanctioned mass murder. Here, I fault Bernstein's judgment. Both, it seems to me, must be explored in coming to an accurate appraisal of Jefferson as symbol and as national patriarch. Yes, O'Brien's work on Jefferson was overheated, but to err in the opposite direction is still to err.

Bernstein finds Jefferson's role in establishing the since discredited science of racial difference deplorable. He notes that not only does Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* list a variety of ways in which he considered blacks inferior to whites, but Jefferson also expressed doubts elsewhere about the veracity of learned blacks' claims to intellectual achievement. In addition,

Bernstein notes, Jefferson sought to colonize black Americans abroad. All of this is rightly deplored, and cogently delineated without any palliatives.

Another area in which Jefferson is judged to have veered near dangerous ground is in that of federalism. His Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, Bernstein says, "carried him dangerously close to embracing secession." Should one be surprised that the author of "A Summary View" and the Declaration of Independence might hint at the acceptability of secession? In his Kentucky Resolutions of 1799, unmentioned in Bernstein's volume, Jefferson had Kentucky say that it would be among the last to secede, and he wrote to John Taylor of Caroline in June 1798 to say, among other things, that the time for secession had not arrived yet. How can Bernstein think it unclear that Jefferson believed in secession as an available option?

Bernstein really misses the nature of Jefferson's constitutionalism, which was Virginia-centered from the Imperial Crisis of the 1760s until his death in 1826. (Jefferson even referred to the federal government as "our foreign government.") Thus, Bernstein says that Jefferson's argument against the Sedition Act of 1798, which regulated speech tending to bring the government into ill repute, rested on the First Amendment. Jefferson's explanation of his objections in the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, however, made the First Amendment a kind of afterthought; it was that law's violation of the Tenth Amendment, which reserves undelegated powers to the states and the people, that had pride of place in Jefferson's argument. Bernstein omits the Tenth Amendment entirely from his account of the Kentucky Resolutions.

Also omitted from Bernstein's account is Jefferson's June 1798 forecast to Taylor that the tax burden of the Federalist defense program would turn voters against the Federalists in 1800. Bernstein joins the post-"Revolution of 1800" Jefferson in ascribing his victory to the "Principles of '98." Thus, instead of heralding a demagogic Jefferson/Madison ascendancy whose climax was the burning of Washington by the British in 1814, Jefferson's First Inaugural Address is described as "a moving testament of democratic faith." By the time that Jefferson's presidential successor and Republican coadjutor in dismantling the American military left office, however, the idea that love of country could fill the role of military preparedness had been forcefully debunked by British arms. The debacle that was the War of 1812 constituted a kind of recapitulation of Jefferson's disastrous tenure as governor of Virginia during the Revolution.

Bernstein rightly notes that Jefferson intended for students at the University of Virginia to be indoctrinated in Jeffersonian politics. Still, the father of that university is a sympathetic figure here. The story of his great twilight labor makes a happy contrast to Gerald Ford golfing or George Bush skydiving.

Why care about Jefferson? In his epilogue, Bernstein quotes Jefferson biographer James Parton's 1874 answer: "If Jefferson was wrong, America is wrong. If America is right, Jefferson was right." Today, with American satrapies firmly (or tenuously) established in Japan, Korea, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Europe, and Latin America, we can see that O'Brien was right to insist on the great significance of the Jefferson image. The lives of America's mythical figures, its secular saints, matter. Despite my criticisms, I can recommend Bernstein's *Thomas Jefferson* as a good place to meet the third president. ■

*Kevin R.C. Gutzman is a professor of history at Western Connecticut State University.*

# Man Bites Poodle



The Oxford Union is the world's most famous debating society, holding a debate each week during term in its Victorian chambers, the largest

hall in the world built for such purpose. Because of the Union, Oxford University wins the European debating championship regularly, a competition that goes all the way back to 1820. These last 184 years, all the great and the good have debated in the Union, certainly all British prime ministers and most American presidents. Last week was my turn, although I had won my first debate there in 1986, when Auberon Waugh (son of Evelyn) and I wiped the floor with England's Lord Chancellor and another high-priced lawyer over the motion that gossip was a necessary part of journalism.

Last week's motion was "This House Believes that Britain is America's Poodle." Defending the motion were Charles Glass and myself. Against it were the formidable Lord Parkinson, who as Cecil Parkinson was Margaret Thatcher's closest adviser and trade minister, and the even more formidable Nicholas Soames. Apart from being Sir Winston Churchill's grandson—his mother is Winnie's only surviving child, Mary—Nicholas's other attributes are a Falstaffian girth and sense of humor, a booming voice and cut-glass accent, and as an ex-minister of the armed forces and present shadow defense minister, an inside knowledge of how the world works. All four of us are fast friends, especially Soames and myself, who have known each other since our teenage years.

So, on a brilliant summer evening—Waugh would have described it as *jejeune*—we met among the dreaming spires and romantic punters, dressed in tails and about to give verbal battle. The beautiful Victorian hall is a replica of the House of Commons. The president of the Union is seated with two assistants—all three were women—high

above the podium where the speakers stand. One is allowed notes, but it is not considered cricket to read out a speech. The hall was packed with around 400 undergraduates, while heads of colleges, or dons, sat on the front benches as they do in Parliament. Once everyone is seated, the speakers walk in and are introduced to loud applause.

Soames was first up and did a very good job. He was self-deprecating, funny, and described the long and friendly relationship between the two nations separated by language. Charlie Glass was emotional and very anti-Bush; the American president ordered Blair to go to war, and Tony jumped like the poodle he is.

Lord Parkinson's was the best speech of the evening. His take was that long after Bush and Blair are gone, America and Britain will be co-operating, and words like poodle will refer only to canines. His lordship knows how the world works inside-out, happens to be a very nice and good-looking man, and by the time I rose to speak, the opposition was way ahead. Or so I thought.

My side, however, had an obvious advantage. We were defending the popular notion that Blair had taken orders from Bush to invade Iraq. My read on the master-poodle relationship was a historical one. FDR had done more damage to the British Empire than Hitler or Stalin or any tin-pot African dictator ever had. The Americans set out to use Lend-Lease to pressure the Brits to open their imperial markets and to relinquish their empire, particularly their possessions in the Western hemisphere. They also made sure that the British depleted their gold reserves to pay for the war against Germany. As the formidable Martin

Gilbert has written, "It was a hard bargain, depriving Britain of what was left of her economic strength .... and as a result, Britain went from being one of the world's creditors to being one of the world's leading debtors. And at the end of the war, the USA owned two-thirds of the world's gold reserves."

I reminded the audience that Britain serves a purpose for Uncle Sam. When Sam breaks international law, he leaves it to the supposedly legally punctilious British to assure the world that the breach of law is only temporary and so on. Britain prides itself as a nuclear power but cannot use its weapons without U.S. permission. Just as Raytheon controls the Tomahawk, so Lockheed controls Trident. Mind you, I could have debated on either side of the podium. Roosevelt and Stalin wanted to execute 50,000 Germans after the war. Churchill objected. British people do not like mass executions; nor do Americans. It is the only concession given to Churchill in Yalta.

In closing, I reminded the audience of the great affection I had for Nicholas Soames and his family—I have romanced his sister—and recounted to them what one of his girlfriends had said to me about him very long ago. "How's Nicholas in the sack?" I had asked her. "It's like being hit by a very large chest of drawers with a small key," she answered. The place went wild. Soames pretended to be angry. The vote took place and my side had won.

We retired upstairs where three of the most beautiful girls I've ever set eyes on talked with us late into the night. Talk about *Brideshead Revisited*. Modern Britain can be a very depressing place nowadays, but at Oxford no one used the F-word, everyone was civilized and kind, and the girls are beautiful, graceful, and very, very feminine. I think I'll move there in the very near future. Anything to get away from unfeminine American feminists. ■



New from the author of the national bestseller—  
*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*

# Is the melting pot overflowing?

American national identity is being eroded by immigration, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and the “denationalization” of American elites. Now author and eminent political scientist Samuel P. Huntington reaffirms what it means to be American.

**“Huntington has written a compelling book on the virtues that make America what it is.”**

—*The Wall Street Journal*



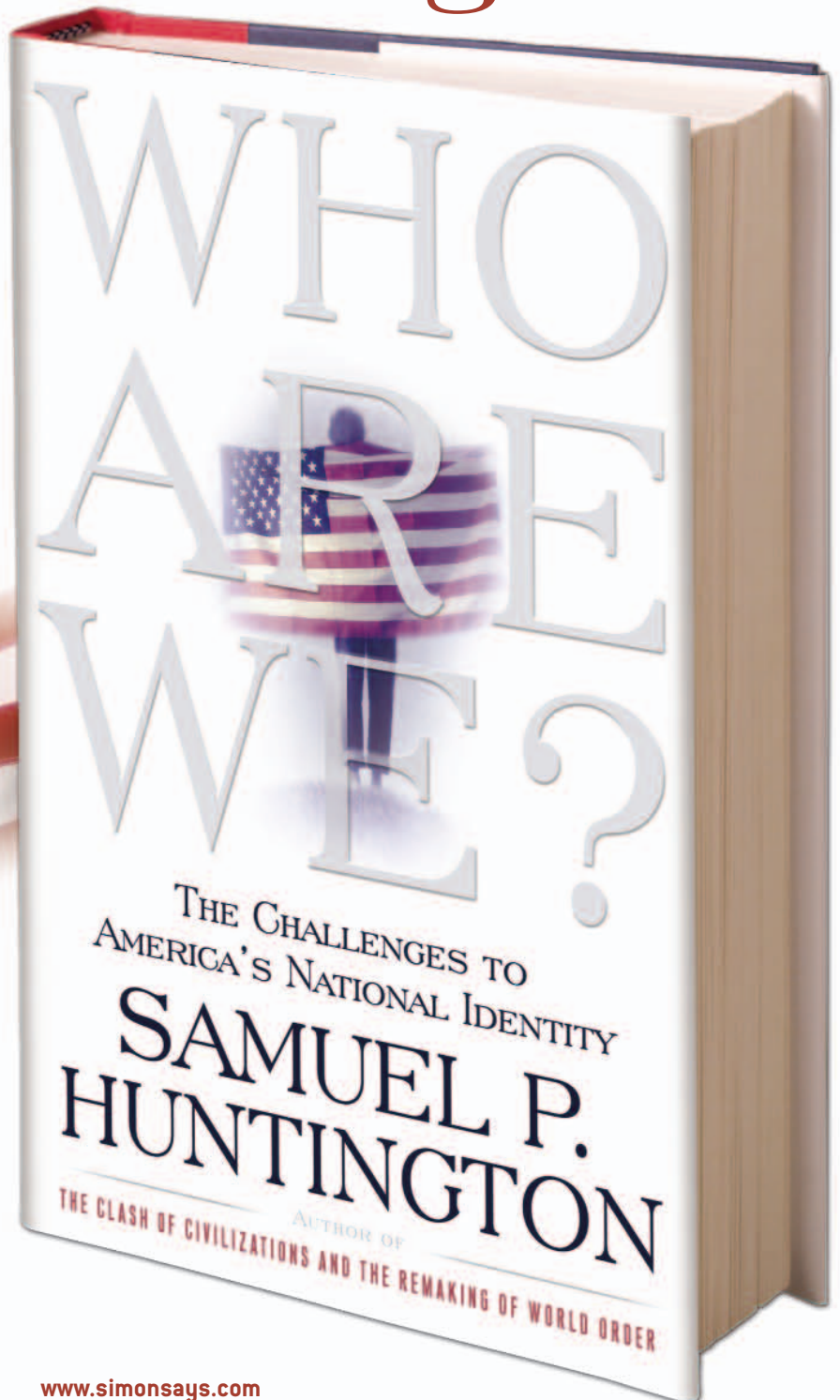
**Praise for *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*:**

“The book is studded with insights, flashes of rare brilliance, great learning, and an ability to see the familiar in a new and provocative way.”

—Michael Elliott, *The Washington Post Book World*

“[A] landmark work.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*



[www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED